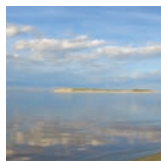




Centuries-old polo field discovered in western Iran **8**



Measures to revive Lake Urmia 'an example to inspire us all': Gary Lewis **9**



Iran have two direct slots in 2021 ACL **11**



Iranian, Russian centers to discuss man's place in Safavid paintings **12**



Zarif likens Trump's 'disinfectant' advice to nuclear deal argument

See page 3

Package for manufacturing electric cars prepared: MAPNA

TEHRAN — Managing Director of Iran's MAPNA Group, a group of Iranian companies involved in development and execution of industrial projects, says the group has prepared a package to be used in the production line of electric cars or to turn regular cars into electric ones.

"This equipment can be utilized to electrify the cars being produced as well as the cars that have been produced and

the owners request to electrify them," Abbas Aliabadi told IRIB.

According to the official, manufacturing electric cars from scratch is a simpler process, however turning regular cars into electric cars based on international standards is also possible.

Aliabadi further noted that European countries electrified the existing vehicles before launching the production line for manufacturing electric cars. **→4**

Virtual meetings to celebrate Khayyam Day

TEHRAN — Several organizations have arranged webinars, meetings and programs to commemorate Khayyam Day, which falls on May 17 this year.

The Neyshabur Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicraft Department will introduce works by the great Persian poet and mathematician Omar

Khayyam (1048-1131) during a webinar on Sunday.

In addition, the Neyshabur Office of Culture and Islamic Guidance plans to organize an online meeting, during which Khayyam scholars Hassan Nazarian and Hamid Khademi will review works written by the great poet. **→12**

Isfahan reopens tourist sites as coronavirus restrictions ease

TEHRAN — Tourist attractions and historical sites in the central Isfahan province have been allowed to reopen their doors to the public as coronavirus lockdown measures are relaxed in the country.

Strict sanitary and social distancing requirements will be observed carefully in these sites, said Hojjatollah Gholami, a spokesman at provincial headquarters for fighting coronavirus, CHTN reported on Thursday.

The country closed cultural heritage

museums and historical sites in a preventive measure amid fears of coronavirus outbreak back in February.

Soaked in a rich history and culture, Isfahan was once a crossroad of international trade and diplomacy in Iran. Now, it is one of Iran's top tourist destinations for good reasons. The ancient city is filled with many architectural wonders such as unmatched Islamic buildings, bazaars, museums, Persian gardens and tree-lined boulevards. **→8**



ARTICLE

Ebrahim Fallahi
Tehran Times journalist

Iran's turbulent auto market: will prices calm down?

Over the past few weeks, car prices in Iran have been skyrocketing despite claims of the market being stagnant.

The astonishingly high prices come despite the fact that the industry minister and chairman of the National Competition Council had announced, earlier this year, a new formula for car pricing, promising that prices will probably drop by 30 to 40 percent.

Some government sources have blamed rising prices on "organized brokerage", while those active in the car market believe the closure of some representative dealership offices to be the main reason for this situation; others believe that the recent rise in prices is due to general inflation.

Whatever the reason, the question is what the government should do to calm the turbulent market and pull the prices back to a normal level.

■ The reasons

The reduction of the output of the country's major automakers has been pointed as one of the main reasons for the recent price hikes

Some experts also believe that the surging prices for some auto models like SAIPA Group's Pride - which was traded at 900 million rials (about \$21,430) in late April - were only valid on paper and cars were not actually traded at that price in the market.

In late April, Saeed Motameni, the president of Tehran's Auto Dealers and Exhibitors Union, told IRNA: "When there is little supply from carmakers, people who have already bought a car as investment become the main players in the market and they are the ones who determine the prices [at least] on paper."

According to Motameni, in the first two months of the year, automakers, as in previous years, are pursuing a strategy for raising prices by intentional reduction of supply to the market.

"There is no monitoring and supervision on the auto dealership companies and agencies, and they price the car arbitrarily and impose their prices on the market." **→4**

Rainfall in Iran 33% higher than long-term average

TEHRAN — Since the beginning of the current water year (September 23, 2019), the whole country received 282 mm of rainfall, which is 31.8 percent higher compared to the past 51 years, which was recorded at 213.9 mm.

However, compared to the same period last year, the country is short of rain by 5.4 percent, as 298.1 mm of rain poured over the country during the previous water year.

Iran is divided into six primary catchment areas, including the Persian Gulf and Sea of Oman in the south (with 440.2 millimeters), the Caspian Sea in the north (417.8 mm), Urmia Lake in the northwest (339.9 mm), Karakum in the northeast (283.9 mm) and the Central Plateau in Markazi Province (226.1 mm).

Precipitation in four catchment areas of Persian Gulf, Sea of Oman, Caspian Sea and Urmia Lake raised compared to that of last

year, while the other two remaining catchments faced rainfall shortages during the same period last year.

The global average annual precipitation is more than 990 mm, based on which Iran is classified as an arid and semi-arid country.

■ Almost all provinces hit long-run means

Gilan, Mazandaran and Lorestan provinces surpassed other provinces in terms of high rainfall rates over the aforesaid period, as the rainiest provinces, Gilan, Mazandaran and Lorestan provinces got 811.7, 663.7 and 581.9 mm of rain, respectively.

However, compared to the previous water year, Gilan province faced 5.8 percent decline in rainfall, and Mazandaran and Lorestan provinces also experienced a 6.2 and 40.7 percent drop in precipitation, while all received more rainfall compared to the long term means. **→9**

Yemeni forces retake strategic positions from Saudi-led mercenaries

Yemeni forces, backed by allied fighters from the Popular Committees, have wrested control over a number of strategic areas in central province of al-Bayda from Saudi-backed mercenaries fighting to reinstate exiled former president Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi.

The media bureau of Yemen's Operations Command Center, in a series of posts published on its official Twitter page, announced that the Yemeni troops and fighters from the Houthis Ansarullah movement launched their attack in Souq al-Qaniyeh area, which lies in the eastern countryside of the province, and succeeded after several hours of heavy combat.

The Yemeni army troopers and Popular Committees fighters also recovered assault rifles as well as munitions from the pro-Hadi militiamen, destroyed a number of their vehicles and set fire to several military fortifications.

Moreover, Saudi-led military aircraft carried out three airstrikes against a customs office in the Harad district, and another two on an area in the Midi district of Yemen's northwestern province of Hajjah early on Friday.

There were no immediate reports of casualties and the extent of damage caused.

Saudi artillery units also shelled residential neighborhoods in the border Razih district of the Yemen's Sa'ada province, with no reports of casualties quickly available.

Elsewhere in the al-Hazm district of the northern Yemeni province of al-Jawf, Saudi warplanes launched four air raids against al-Khasaf region.

Separately, Saudi fighter jets pounded areas in the Majzar and Medghal districts of Yemen's central province of Ma'rib. No words about the extent of damage and possible casualties were immediately reported. **→10**

Iranian diplomat says INSTEX is not enough

TEHRAN — Deputy Foreign Minister for Economic Diplomacy Gholamreza Ansari has said that current interactions through INSTEX (the Instrument in Support of Trade Exchanges) are not enough.

"This mechanism [the INSTEX] is not enough for us. However, we started limited activities with it before the New Year's holidays," he told IRIB in an interview published on Friday.

Iran's New Year began on March 21.

Ansari noted that the Europeans are cooperating, however, the type and number of imported

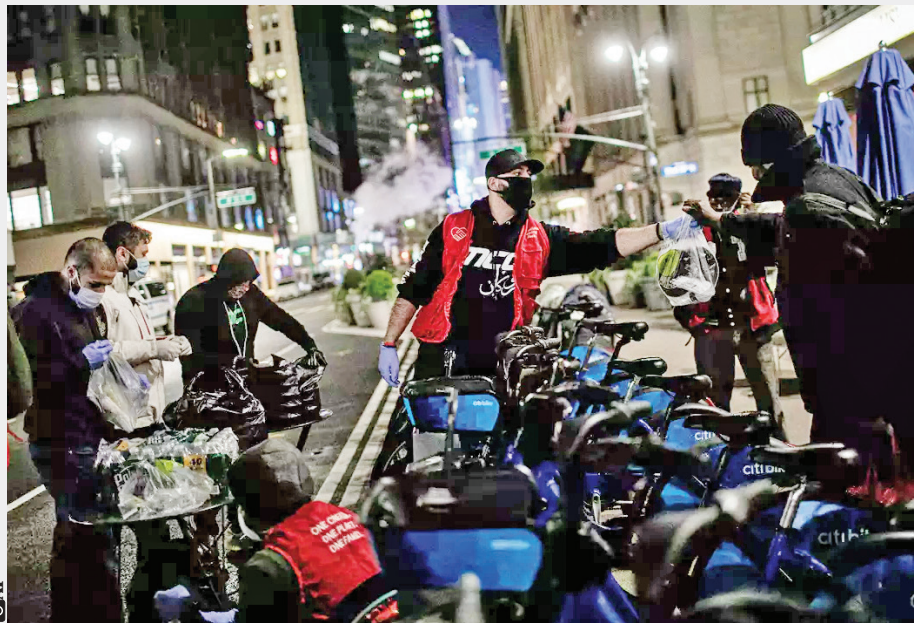
commodities are limited.

INSTEX has been designed to facilitate legitimate trade with Tehran. It was introduced on January 31, 2019 by France, Germany, and Britain, the three European countries party to the nuclear deal.

INSTEX was supposed to be a financial channel and a special mechanism for transferring money in spite of U.S. sanctions on Iran. Its objective was to facilitate Iran's transactions with European companies.

In late November 2019, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands, Norway, and Sweden issued a joint statement announcing becoming shareholders of INSTEX.

"In light of the continuous European support for the agreement and the ongoing efforts to implement the economic part of it and to facilitate legitimate trade between Europe and Iran, we are now in the process of becoming shareholders of the Instrument in Support of Trade Exchanges (INSTEX) subject to completion of national procedures. **→2**



A different Ramadan for U.S. Muslims amid Coronavirus lockdowns

From Brooklyn to the Bronx, Muslim community organizations are building mutual aid networks to support families who need food, particularly during Ramadan, when many families rely on free nightly meals from local mosques.

The coronavirus pandemic has turned life upside down for many New Yorkers, including those who wish to safely practice their faiths.

Muslims, who are fasting in the holy month of Ramadan, are no exception. The holy month involving fasting from sunup to sundown, charity and prayer is typically celebrated as a community. But due to social distancing, that's not possible this year. **→10**

MBS asks new Iraqi PM to mediate between Riyadh and Tehran: Middle East Eye

By staff and agency

Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MBS) has asked new Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi to mediate between the Saudi kingdom and Iran, senior Iraqi political sources have told Middle East Eye.

"The first call Kadhimi got after his nomination was from the crown prince of Saudi Arabia, Mohammed bin Salman, who asked the new Iraqi prime minister to restart mediation with Iran, the sources said," Middle East Eye reported on Thursday.

The Saudi crown prince said in an interview with CBS's 60 Minutes program aired on September 29 that he preferred a peaceful resolution with Iran, describing it as "much better than the military" option.

Kadhimi formally took office on May 7.

Iran and Saudi Arabia have been at loggerheads over a number of issues including the Saudi war on Yemen and Riyadh's support for Donald Trump's anti-Iran moves.

Saudi Foreign Minister Farhan Al Saud told Reuters on January 22 that Riyadh was open to talks with Tehran. However, he leveled some accusations against Iran. The Saudi minister said Iran should act like a normal country. In response, Zarif said a normal country does not invade its neighbors, an open reference to the Saudi-led war on Yemen.

Pakistani Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi has welcomed a readiness by Tehran and Riyadh to hold dialogue to reduce tensions.

"We call for clearing up misunderstanding between two brotherly countries of Iran and Saudi Arabia," IRNA quoted him as saying on January 24 on the sidelines of a press conference in Islamabad.

Iranian diplomat says INSTEX is not enough

➔ INSTEX was established by France, Germany and the United Kingdom in January 2019," read the statement, published by the Foreign Ministry of Finland.

Iran has likened INSTEX to a beautiful car that lacks gasoline.

In a telephone conversation with his French counterpart Emmanuel Macron in April, President Hassan Rouhani described as "positive but insufficient" the first steps that the three European parties to the nuclear treaty have taken to bring INSTEX into operation.

"This path should not be confined to the medical commodities and foodstuff alone, and we must be able to use it to supply all of our country's demands," Rouhani underlined.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi said in April that the INSTEX is a preliminary step for Europeans to fulfill their obligations and their commitments are not limited to it.

president asks for int'l community's pressure on Israel to withdraw from Palestinian lands

TEHRAN (FNA) — Iranian President Hassan Rouhani underlined the necessity for the international community to force Israel to return the Palestinian territories to their real owners.

The international community should take practical steps to bring Israeli atrocities and crimes against humanity to an end and force Israel to withdraw from the occupied territories of the Palestinians, Rouhani said, addressing a meeting of the specialized committees of the National Task Force for Fighting Coronavirus on Thursday.

He stressed the importance and necessity of keeping the International Quds Day alive, he said, "While this day is important in condemning the occupying regime and supporting the oppressed people of Palestine, observing health protocols are also essential".

Rouhani described the role of the media more and more serious in this regard, and stated, "We must take steps to condemn the occupying Zionist Regime and support the oppressed people of Palestine by using various and more effective methods than in previous years."

The International Quds Day is an annual event opposing Israel's occupation of Beitul-Muqaddas. Anti-Zionist rallies and demonstrations are held on the last Friday of Ramadan in Muslim and Arab countries around the world, especially in Iran, as well as a large number of non-Muslim states.

The International Quds Day was started by the late Founder of the Islamic Republic, Imam Khomeini, in 1979 as a way of expressing solidarity with the Palestinians and underscoring importance of the holy Quds to Muslims.

High COVID-19 fatality rate among Afro-Americans due to 'rampant racism' under Trump: Iran

(Press TV) — Iran says "rampant racism" emanating from the administration of U.S. President Donald Trump is to blame for the disproportionate number of African-Americans dying of the COVID-19 pandemic in the country.

In a Wednesday tweet, the Iranian Foreign Ministry said the United States has failed "disastrously" in handling the coronavirus outbreak due to "rampant racism and class inequality in the age of Trump."



The tweet further highlighted the increased racial discrimination in the U.S., referring in particular to the killing of Ahmaud Arbery — a black man lynched by a white ex-cop and his son — and Breonna Taylor, who was mistakenly shot dead in a botched police raid, as well as the "skyrocketing" number of African-Americans dying of the COVID-19.

A recent study in the United States provided more evidence that the coronavirus is killing more African-Americans than whites or other ethnic groups, highlighting longstanding disparities in access to health care and economic opportunity.

U.S. cities and towns with higher black populations account for more than half of all COVID-19 cases and almost 60 percent of deaths, according to the study conducted by four universities and two health organizations.

African-Americans represent 13.4 percent of the American population, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

A May 13 report by The Washington Post warned that a pandemic of stress is also threatening the Black Americans already devastated by the COVID-19.

The report said the stress caused by the coronavirus pandemic will have profound implications for the mental and physical health of black Americans and will have a dangerous impact long after the novel coronavirus has been contained.

"The virus is not only killing black Americans in disproportionate numbers, but is also forcing them to risk their health and their lives as essential workers, to care for loved ones who become sick and to attempt to self-isolate in crowded living conditions," it added.

World must stand up for Palestinians' rights: Iran

POLITICAL DESK **TEHRAN** — Iran's Foreign Ministry has urged the world to stand up for the Palestinians' rights.

"Today is the Day of Catastrophe (or #NakbaDay) after the Zionists' occupation of the lands of Palestinians, led to their mass exodus since 1948. The world must stand up for the Palestinians' right to self-determination, as this long overdue right is recognized globally," the Foreign Ministry said in a tweet on Thursday.

Israeli-American activist and author Miko Peled has told the Tehran Times that "Israel is an apartheid regime" which "has been involved in genocide and ethnic cleansing of Palestinians."

Also in a tweet on Friday, the Iranian Foreign Ministry said, Accurately speaking, the US is committed to an apartheid regime whose existence depends on racism, occupation, terror & aggression, to name a few. The partnership America is cherishing has built on destruction, bloodshed in #Palestine & beyond. The alliance does make the world insecure.

The Foreign Ministry also issued a statement on Thursday calling on the



international community to take effective action to support Palestinians' struggles to liberate their land.

"During more than seven decades of occupation, the Zionist regime began its acts of aggression with war and crime against the

real owners of this land and then continued this policy with building settlements (deep into occupied territories), displacing Palestinians, desecrating al-Aqsa Mosque, Judaizing al-Quds and the West Bank, continuing the blockade of Gaza, illegally annexing the

occupied Golan (Heights) and attempting to grab major parts of the West Bank," said the statement, according to Tasnim news agency.

The statement expressed Iran's support for the Palestinian cause, calling on the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), governments, Islamic countries, and all freedom-seeking nations around the world to help end Israeli occupation and aggression and restore the Palestinian people's rights.

Nakba day, meaning 'Day of the Catastrophe', is observed on 15 May every year.

In 1948, the Zionist regime forced 760,000 Palestinians out of their homeland to the West Bank and Gaza Strip, neighboring Arab states as well as to many other countries in the world, and hundreds of Palestinian villages were depopulated and destroyed. The vast majority of Palestinian refugees, both those outside the 1949 armistice lines at the war's conclusion and those internally displaced, were barred by Israel from returning to their homes or reclaiming their property. This dispossession and dispersal of the Palestinian people is known to them as al-Nakba, meaning "the catastrophe," or "the disaster."

China: U.S. has no right to extend arms embargo on Iran, let alone to invoke snapback sanctions

POLITICAL DESK **TEHRAN** — China has said the United States has "no right" to extend arms embargo on Iran "let alone to trigger" a return of all UN sanctions on Tehran.

"It has no right to extend an arms embargo on Iran, let alone to trigger snapback," China's UN mission wrote in a tweet on Thursday.

"Maintaining [the] Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action is the only right way moving forward," it added.

The United States has stepped up calls for the extension of a UN arms embargo on Iran since April.

Under the UN Security Council's 2231 resolution, which endorsed the 2015 nuclear deal, the arms embargo expires in October.

The U.S. President Donald Trump administration has threatened that it may seek to trigger a snapback of all sanctions on Iran if its attempts to extend the arms embargo fail.

■ 'U.S. seeks to blackmail UNSC member states'

Mikhail Ulyanov, Russia's permanent representative to the Vienna-based international organizations, has said that it looks like the U.S. attempts to blackmail the UN Security



Council members.

"Looks like an attempt to blackmail UNSC Member States. US position on arms embargo against #Iran and #SnapBack is very weak not only from the viewpoint of common sense but also in legal terms," he said in a tweet on Thursday.

His comments came as Richard Goldberg, a political

Bombs equipped its F-14s with modified hawk SAMs that had bombs attached to their nose

Iran is well known for repackaging and repurposing aircraft, weapons, and other military equipment that the United States supplied to the country when it was under the rule of Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi. Some of the earliest and most novel efforts took place during the brutal Iran-Iraq War, including the combination of elements of the MIM-23 Hawk surface-to-air missile and the 750-pound class M117 bomb to create an air-to-surface weapon called Yasser for the Iranian Air Force's F-14A Tomcats.

Development of the Yasser began toward the tail end of the Iran-Iraq War, which lasted from 1980 to 1988. Iran's desire for a stand-off air-to-surface weapon would have made good sense as Iraq continued to bolster its air defense capabilities during the conflict. While the Shah had obtained thousands of AGM-65 Maverick air-to-surface missiles in the 1970s, the Iranian Air Force's stocks had begun to run low as the fighting dragged on.

Shortages of American-supplied missiles had already prompted Iran to experiment with converting MIM-23 missiles into air-



A picture of two Iranian Tomcats. The aircraft in the background is carrying a pair of modified MIM-23 Hawk missiles.

to-air weapons for the F-14 as an alternative to the AIM-54 Phoenix as part of a project called Sky Hawk. In the end, some of Iran's Tomcats were modified to carry one of the large missiles on each of their two wing glove

hardpoints, where were more commonly occupied by AIM-7 Sparrow air-to-air missiles.

Testing of the air-to-air Hawks, which Iran dubbed Sedjils, uncovered a number of issues. The F-14A's then-state-of-the-art AN/AWG-

9 fire control radar was never meant to work with the MIM-23 and getting the two systems to work together proved problematic. There were also concerns about whether the Sedjil might severely damage the Tomcat launching it.

Ultimately Iran did conduct tests the Sedjils in 1986 and converted a relatively small number of MIM-23s into these air-to-air weapons, but their use was equally limited. Iran also continued to use its increasingly limited supply of AIM-54s and also managed to bolster its stocks of those weapons somewhat thanks to the Iran-Contra scandal. Much more recently, in 2017, Iran claimed to have created a domestic derivative of the Phoenix, called the Fakour-90.

The first tests of Yasser followed relatively soon after those of Sedjil. From what is known, the air-to-surface weapon was created by simply removing the nose section of the MIM-23 and replacing it with a modified M117 gravity bomb with its tail fins removed. F-14s could carry two Yassers in the same manner as the Sedjils.

(Source: thedrive.com)

Russia says no one is allowed to implement UNSC resolutions selectively

By staff and agency

Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Ryabkov said on Thursday that no country is allowed to implement the United Nations Security Council resolutions selectively.

Ryabkov was openly referring to Resolution 2231 that endorsed the 2015 nuclear deal but violated it by quitting the JCPOA, the official name for the nuclear pact.

"No one is allowed to implement UN Security Council resolutions selectively and extremely fragmentarily," Ryabkov told the Valdai discussion club, the UrduPoint News reported.

The actions of the United States to extend the arms embargo and launch the process of returning sanctions against Iran are "cynical" and could lead to a crisis in the UN Security Council, the top Russian diplomat said.

"In this situation, it is cynical to push for the activation of the snapback mechanism [return of sanctions], which is laid down in this resolution," Ryabkov said.

"Washington will not have an easy road here in any case. Although the conclusion is that the next crisis in the UN Security Council and the UN as a whole is imminent, taking into account this U.S. stubbornness. Of course, I can agree with this conclusion," he said.

Ryabkov noted that it was the United States that had left the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action two years ago, and now they are "in a

state of gross violation of UN Security Council resolution [2231]."

Russia's Ambassador to the United Nations Vasily Nebenzya has said that the U.S. cannot demand the extension of arms embargo against Tehran since it is no more a party to the nuclear deal.

"I do not see any reasons why arms embargo should be imposed on Iran," TASS quoted him as saying on Wednesday in a press conference.

The high-ranking diplomat noted that exactly two years ago the U.S. "proudly announced" that it is abandoning the JCPOA and closed the door behind.

"Now they knock on that door and say 'just wait for a second, we forgot to do one little thing on the JCPOA. Let us back, we will do it and leave again'. This is ridiculous," Nebenzya said.

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo is preparing an argument that the U.S. remains a participant in the Iran nuclear accord that President Trump has renounced, part of an intricate strategy to pressure the UN Security Council to extend an arms embargo on Tehran or see far more stringent sanctions reimposed on the country.

Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said on May 5 that Pompeo pretends UNSCR 2231 is independent of the JCPOA, noting that the JCPOA is "PART OF 2231".

In a tweet, Zarif advised Pompeo to read the 2231 resolution.

INTERNATIONAL TENDER NOTICE NO. 99002



Hereby Sirjan Jahan Steel Complex (SJSCO) invites reputable firms and companies to the tender No. 99002, in respect of selling and exporting 20,000 Mt of 5SP Steel Billets (Size: 150 x 150 mm) on the basis of FOB shipping point, therefore interested bidders are invited to obtain tender documents by sending a formal letter of interest to the E-mail addresses below:

SJSCO.SALES@gmail.com

S No.	Description	End Date
1	Submission of Financial Bid	7 (seven) days from tender notice publication.

Terms & Conditions:

- The tender documents will be sent to the bidders via E-mail.
- All bids should be sent in sealed envelopes.
- Conditional bids shall not be accepted.
- LOI should be prepared on company's heading, stamped and signed by the authorized signatories.
- No financial bid shall be accepted later than above-said end date of bid submission.
- SJSCO reserves the right to reject any or all the proposals.

For more information, please contact us at:

Tel: +982186086357 - +982186085834 - +982186084633

Cell: +989125487946

Zarif likens Trump's 'disinfectant' advice to nuclear deal argument

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has likened Washington's JCPOA argument to U.S. President Donald Trump's suggestion to inject disinfectant to treat coronavirus patients.

"Those who muse about injecting disinfectant to 'clean' the coronavirus, also argue that they are a 'participant' in a UN Security Council Resolution endorsing a deal that they long ago 'ceased participating' in," Zarif tweeted on Thursday. "Their own words."

"If only Kafka were around," he added. During a daily briefing last month, Trump hinted that "disinfectant" can be used to cure people infected with the coronavirus.

"I see the disinfectant that knocks it out in a minute, one minute. And is there a way we can do something like that by injection inside or almost a cleaning," the president said.

Trump, appearing to refer to the disinfectant idea, continued to say, "You see it gets in the lungs and it does a tremendous number [on the] lungs, so it would be interesting to check that."

"We're going to have to use medical doctors, but it seems interesting to me."

Last month, U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said Washington technically remained a "participant" in the deal in order to use a mechanism embedded within the



accord to make the UN maintain an arms embargo on Tehran.

U.S. Special Representative for Iran Brian Hook also told reporters, "We are operating under the assumption that we will be able to renew the arms embargo."

In similar remarks earlier on Thursday,

Zarif said that making "foolish" claims by U.S. officials is nothing new.

Referring to Trump, Zarif said, "It is not unexpected of those advising people to drink or inject disinfectants to fight the coronavirus to come forward and say they are still a party to the agreement after officially leaving it."

Observers say the United States would face a messy battle if it tries to trigger a return of sanctions, which includes the arms ban on Iran.

Hook wrote in the Wall Street Journal on Wednesday that "one way or another" Washington would ensure the arms embargo remains. He said the United States has drafted a Security Council resolution and "will press ahead with diplomacy and build support."

A resolution needs nine yes votes and no vetoes by Russia, China, the United States, France or Britain to be adopted by the 15-member Security Council. Russia has already signaled it is opposed to extending the arms embargo.

"If American diplomacy is frustrated by a veto, however, the U.S. retains the right to renew the arms embargo by other means," Hook wrote, citing the ability of a party to the Iran nuclear deal to trigger a so-called snapback of all UN sanctions on Iran, which includes the arms embargo.

Also, in comments targeting Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden, Hook said "nothing will be left of the JCPOA until you return to it."

In response, Zarif said, "It is none of Brian Hook's business to say 'nothing will be left of the JCPOA'. What is important is between Iran and the JCPOA's remaining parties".

Atlantic Council enumerates five reasons why Trump's Iran policy has backfired

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — U.S. President Donald Trump withdrew from the Iran nuclear deal, officially called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), two years ago and reimposed sanctions on Iran as part of his "maximum pressure" policy against Tehran.

Sanctions imposed by the Trump administration have contributed to a serious contraction of the Iranian economy, but they have failed to change Iran's policies.

In an article published in the Atlantic Council published on Thursday, Barbara Slavin listed five ways in which the Trump approach has backfired.

The following is the text of the article:

1) In his speech to the nation on May 8, 2018, Trump promised that his new policy would help to "eliminate the threat of Iran's ballistic missile program; to stop its terrorist activities worldwide; and to block its menacing activity across the Middle East." However, Iran has continued its missile program and even launched a military satellite into orbit. It has become more aggressive regionally, with tensions in the Persian Gulf and Iraq having brought the U.S. and Iran to the brink of war. Furthermore, this may even force the U.S. to quit Iraq, leaving that country even more vulnerable to Iran.

2) After remaining compliant with the JCPOA for a year after U.S. withdrawal, Iran, now, possesses sufficient low-enriched uranium for a single nuclear weapon and has resumed enrichment at the underground site at Fordow. If the U.S. tries to "snap back" sanctions despite its own non-compliance with the deal, Iran may quit both the JCPOA and the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, following the route North Korea took in 2003 towards developing nuclear weapons.

3) U.S. policy toward Iran has deepened the divide with our closest allies in Europe, which have been trying to preserve the JCPOA. Experience has shown that pressure on Iran only works when it is multilateral and has realistic and achievable goals. European collaboration is essential for Iran sanctions and diplomacy to work.

4) By seeking to force other countries to join the "maximum



"Sanctions, like antibiotics, lose efficacy if they are overused."

pressure" campaign against their own policy preferences, the Trump administration has undermined sanctions as a non-kinetic tool of foreign policy. Sanctions, like antibiotics, lose efficacy if they are overused. Over time, nations will build workarounds. China, in particular, has the economic power to grow parallel international financial mechanisms. When the U.S. really needs to impose sanctions in the future, it may find that they have minimal impact.

5) The U.S. withdrawal from the JCPOA discredited the government of Iranian President Hassan Rouhani and strengthened hardline forces that are virulently opposed to normal relations with the U.S. Next year, Iran is likely to elect a president whose cabinet will not be full of American PhDs. It will be harder to negotiate a "better deal" with such a government even if Joe Biden is president. Precious time—when talks could have proceeded on a JCPOA 2.0, regional conflict resolution, and other matters—has been squandered.

These deleterious consequences are unfolding at a time of global health emergency over the COVID-19 pandemic.

Such a crisis could have provided the Trump administration with a justification to ease sanctions, if only, as a gesture to the long-suffering Iranian people.

However, despite assurances that food and medicine are not sanctioned, the U.S. has failed to take steps that could have alleviated Iran's predicament. It has sought to obstruct Iran's request for an emergency \$5 billion loan from the IMF and Iran's access to funds frozen in foreign banks.

Apart from Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and a handful of Washington neoconservatives, the two-year anniversary of the U.S. withdrawal from the JCPOA has found few defenders. Among U.S. allies, only Israel has continued to cheerlead for a policy that is all pressure and no incentives.

Pompeo is now leading the charge to extend a UN embargo on conventional arms transfers to Iran that, under the JCPOA, expires in October. He is using a disingenuous and dubious argument that the U.S. is still a "participant" in the deal despite its unilateral exit two years ago. If the UN Security Council fails to kowtow to U.S. demands—almost a certainty given Russian and Chinese veto power—the U.S. has threatened to snap back sanctions and blow up what remains of the JCPOA. This is an egregious misuse of a provision meant to keep Iran in compliance and will be difficult to restore in any future accord.

The losers in this strategy will be the rule of law and, ultimately, U.S. leadership.

Around the world, many are already looking at our country with dismay as the death toll mounts due to the pandemic and as the federal government struggles to respond. The Trump administration has also disparaged the World Health Organization and threatened to starve it of funds when they are most needed.

On Iran, as on so many other issues—from climate change to conflict-resolution—the Trump administration is either AWOL or obstructive. No PhD in international relations is required to understand the consequences of such "malign" behavior: when the U.S. makes demands in the future, fewer nations will follow.

U.S. 'not a good yardstick' for measuring anti-terror efforts: Tehran



POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — The United States is not a good yardstick for measuring anti-terrorism efforts, Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi has said, hinting at Washington's history of founding, funding and arming different terrorist groups.

"With a history of founding, funding & arming different terrorist groups, a record of state terrorism, and its outright support for another terrorist regime, US is not a good yardstick for measuring anti-terrorism efforts," Mousavi said in a Thursday tweet.

It came days after the U.S. Department of State notified Congress that Iran, North Korea, Syria, Venezuela, and Cuba were certified under Section 40A(a) of the Arms Export Control Act as "not cooperating fully" with U.S. counterterrorism efforts in 2019.

The statement prohibited the sale or license for export of defense articles and services and notified the U.S. public and international community that these countries are not fully cooperating with U.S. counterterrorism efforts.

The United States labels resistance

forces such as Hezbollah and Hamas that resist the Israeli occupation of their lands as terrorist. Likewise, it brands Iraqi Popular Mobilization Units (PMU) that have been fighting terrorist groups such as Daesh and also seek an exit of U.S. forces from their country as terrorist.

"In 2019, Iran continued to be the world's largest state sponsor of terrorism, supporting Hizballah, Palestinian terrorist groups, and other terrorist groups operating throughout the Middle East," according to the statement.

The U.S. State Department added, "In 2019, Iran maintained its support for various Iraqi Shia terrorist groups, including Kata'ib Hizballah (KH), Harakat al-Nujaba (HAN), and Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq (AAH). Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), a designated Foreign Terrorist Organization, has been directly involved in terrorist plotting and has killed U.S. citizens. The IRGC—most prominently through its Qods Force—has the greatest role among Iranian regime actors in directing and carrying out a global terrorist campaign."

Iranian envoy: No deal with Washington on Al-Kadhimi's election



TEHRAN (FNA) — Iranian Ambassador to Baghdad Iraj Masjedi has said that election of Mustafa al-Kadhimi as Iraq's new prime minister was not the result of an agreement with Washington.

"No deal was made with Washington about designation of al-Kadhimi as Iraq's prime minister," Masjedi told the Iran-based Arabic-language al-Alam news channel on Wednesday.

He said that al-Kadhimi's government has been supported by all political groups in Iraq, expressing the hope that Iraq would witness stability and security after his election.

Masjedi also said that despite all its attempts to pressure Baghdad, Washington cannot take any measure to impose sanctions on Iraq as the country needs Iran's energy and electricity.

He, meantime, expressed optimism that the new Iraqi government would have positive interactions with Iran, saying that new agreements have been

made to strengthen bilateral ties.

A major Iranian exporter said on Saturday that Iran will continue exporting energy to Iraq despite obstacles placed by the illegal U.S. sanctions that prevent Iran from receiving its money back from the country.

Iranian exporter Hamid Hosseini said that Iran may decide to use the money accumulated in Iraq for energy exports to buy commodities in exchange.

"The money for electricity and gas exports is deposited in an account in the Trade Bank of Iraq," said Hosseini, adding, "We succeeded to release part of the money last year and the rest is still in the account."

He added that 1,500 megawatts of electricity are exported to Iraq per day.

One megawatt can power nearly 1,000 homes.

"Iran also exports around 30 million cubic meters of natural gas to Iraq each day to help the country run its power plants," Hosseini said.

Afghan expert team visit border area; Iran calls on Afghanistan to activate border checkpoints

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — On Thursday, an Afghan expert team entered Iran and then visited the site where it is believed that about 17 Afghan migrants had been drowned in Harirud (The Heray Rud River), a place separates the two countries in the border province of Sistan-Baluchestan.



In a joint meeting, the Iranian border guards pointed to cultural, religious and ethnic relations between the people of the two countries and also insisted on the need that the Afghan side to closely watch its borders by activating border checkpoints as soon as possible.

The Afghan delegation was to release its investigations in future days after consultations with top Afghan officials.

Following claims by some foreign-based media outlets hostile to Iran that a number of Afghan nationals have been drowned by Iran's border guards, the case was specifically put on the agenda of the Iranian border guards and Foreign Ministry.

After the preliminary investigation and dispatch of expert teams, it became clear that this issue was a false claim and the Iranian police force officially rejected rumors that Iran was involved in the tragic incident.

Given the respect for the friendly and neighboring country of Afghanistan, Iran asked the country to dispatch expert teams to investigate the case according to the international protocols.

Iran's parliamentary body condemns Israel's land theft policies

TEHRAN (Tasnim) — The Permanent Secretariat of the International Conference on Supporting Palestinian Intifada (Uprising) at the Iranian Parliament strongly condemned the Israeli regime's plan to annex major parts of the occupied Palestinian land in the West Bank.

The Zionists are wrong to think that they can annex the West Bank, the Golan Heights and the Shebaa Farms to the occupied territories with backing from U.S. President Donald Trump and the Zionist lobby in the United States, as the U.S. decline and the withdrawal of foreign troops from the region are already on the horizon, the secretariat said in a statement.



"The fake regime of Israel and Zionism have no place in the future of the region," it added, according to Press TV.

The Wednesday statement was released on the upcoming occasion of the 72nd anniversary of Nakba Day (Day of Catastrophe), which falls on May 15.

Nakba Day refers to the forcible expulsion of some 700,000 Palestinians from their land in 1948 and their scattering across refugee camps in the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and neighboring countries.

The statement said the Israeli regime was exploiting the deteriorating regional and international developments to press ahead with its crimes, including the desecration of al-Aqsa Mosque, settlement expansion activities, efforts to Judaize the West Bank and Jerusalem (al-Quds), and the siege of the Gaza Strip.

Tensions have been running high in the occupied territories amid plans by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's new coalition administration to impose Tel Aviv's "sovereignty" over Israeli settlements and certain strategic territories in the West Bank. The annexations, which are detailed in Trump's Middle East plan, have drawn sharp criticism from the Palestinians.

Palestinians have also rejected the U.S.'s so-called deal of the century and cut ties with the Trump administration in 2017 over its pro-Israel stance.

The unilateral pro-Israel proposal is fruitless as it can only lead to further unity among the Palestinian people and political groups, the statement by the Iranian parliamentary body said, adding, "This new colonial plan, which is worse than apartheid, has made the resistance (front) more determined than ever to believe in 'resistance until victory.'"

"Undoubtedly, the U.S. president's deal of the century and sycophantic attempts by a few failed Arab states to normalize relations with the Zionists will ... fail to break the determination of the resistance (front) and the Palestinian nation to liberate (Palestine) and return to their homeland," the statement said.

It added that Trump's move and its support by some Arab rulers showed their complicity with the Israeli regime's crimes over the past seven decades, noting they must be held accountable for their immoral acts.

The statement comes as Israeli forces have been escalating acts of aggression against Palestinians amid a rising uproar over the annexation plans.

Israeli forces shot dead a Palestinian teenage boy south of the West Bank city of al-Khalil on Wednesday morning.

For Palestinians and much of the international community, the annexation plan amounts to a grave violation of international law and would dash hopes of a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Package for manufacturing electric cars prepared: MAPNA

1 → “We have made plans in coordination with domestic automakers and will follow up on them to electrify domestic cars,” he said.

Emphasizing the importance of developing the infrastructure for manufacturing electric vehicles in the country, the official said: “We are installing the charging stations for this type of car across the country and we are ready to develop this equipment. Currently, these stations have been installed in Tehran and Mashhad and will be implemented in other cities in near future.”



MAPNA Group is a group of Iranian companies involved in development and execution of thermal and renewable power plants, oil & gas, railway transportation, and other industrial projects as well as manufacturing main equipment including gas and steam turbines, electrical generator.

TSE witnesses 3.5% growth of its main index in a week

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — TEDPIX, then main index of Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), gained 39,77 points to 1.017 million during the past Iranian calendar week (ended on Friday), IRNA reported.

As reported, Bank Mellat, Isfahan Oil Refinery, National Iranian Copper Industry Company, Iran Khodro Investment Development Company, Kharazmi Investment Group, Bank Tejarat, and Mobarakeh Steel Company were the biggest contributors to the index's gain in the past week.

On May 9, TEDPIX hit the record high of one million points. The index's daily jump was also unprecedented as it gained 42,372 points to stand at 1.2 million points.

Securities worth 101.018 trillion rials (about \$2.405 billion) were traded through one million deals at the TSE.

Mobarakeh Steel Company, Persian Gulf Petrochemical Industry Company, Pars Petrochemical Company, and National Iranian Copper Industry were the biggest contributors to the index jump.

While the past Iranian calendar year (ended on March 19) was full of success for the TSE, the market is also preserving its successful performance in the current year, and the noticeable point in this due is that the other economic sectors are experiencing some declining trend due to the coronavirus pandemic.

We have been witnessing new record highs continuously posted by the exchange since the year start, and climbing to the peak of one million points, something almost unbelievable just some time ago, has already come true.

Also as another fruitful step, on May 2, TSE, which is the main stock exchange of Iran, listed the first exchange-traded fund (ETF) from a series of three ETFs, through them shares of some state-owned organizations and companies are planned to be offered.

An exchange-traded fund (ETF) is an investment fund traded on stock exchanges, much like stocks. An ETF holds assets such as stocks, commodities, or bonds and generally operates with an arbitrage mechanism designed to keep it trading close to its net asset value, although deviations can occasionally occur.

The three ETFs are planned to offer 550 trillion rials (about \$13 billion) worth of the governmental stakes, of which 165 trillion rials (about \$3.9 billion) is to be offered via the first fund.

The first ETF, established by the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs, comprises government shares in three banks, including Bank Mellat, Tejarat Bank, and Bank Saderat, as well as the shares of two insurance companies, i.e. Iranian Reinsurance Company and Alborz Company.

Iran denies collision of its cargo ship in Singapore Strait

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Head of Iran's Ports and Maritime Organization (PMO) denies the reports on the collision of the container ship, Shahraz, with an Indonesian bulk carrier called the Samudra Sakti I, IRIB reported on Friday.



According to Mohammad Rastad, the damage to the Iranian cargo ship in the Singapore Strait is most probably due to the grounding, and necessary measures are being taken to investigate the accident and save the ship.

Based on the latest information received, the cargo ship, which belongs to the Islamic Republic of Iran Shipping Lines (IRISL), deviated from its route in the Singapore Strait and ran aground, Rastad explained.

“Details of the extent of the damage and the definite causes of the accident will be announced after the investigations are completed,” the official said.

The official noted that currently, the priority is to rescue the ship, which is still stuck in the location, adding that local rescue teams will be used for the rescue operation.

Shahraz, and the Indonesian carrier were stuck in Singapore Strait at around 1900 UTC on May 10 in close proximity to each other headed in the same direction.

Later, Maritime Bulletin reported that photos they received suggested that there was a serious collision between the two vessels with the container ship sustaining a hull breach and cracks port side.

Annual steel ingot output to reach 33m tons

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — According to Iran's outlook plan for mining sector, production of steel ingot in the country is planned to hit 33 million tons in the current Iranian calendar year (ends on March 20, 2021), IRNA reported on Friday.

The country has produced 20.226 million tons of steel ingots during the past year.

The report also said that major steel producers have produced 1.797 million tons of steel ingots during the first Iranian calendar month of Farvardin (March 20-April 19), which accounts for 5.4 percent of the planned 33-million-ton output. The figure shows the monthly growth of one percent.

Iran's annual steel ingot production is planned to increase 3.2 million tons in the current year, as announced by the Iranian Mines and Mining Industries Development and Renovation Organization (IMIDRO).

IMIDRO has put the value of the projects to boost the steel ingot output in the present year at \$793 million.

Citing the data indicated in the World Steel Association (WSA)'s latest report, IMIDRO has also announced that production of crude steel in Iran has risen 14.1 percent in March 2020 from March 2019.



The WSA's report, which is on steel production by 64 countries, put Iran's steel output at over 2.8 million tons in March.

WSA has previously announced that Iran's crude steel production climbed 30 percent in 2019 while the average global growth in this sector stood at 3.5 percent.

According to the global organization, Iran produced 31.9 million tons of crude steel in 2019, while the figure was 24 million

tons in 2018.

The data and reports released by Iranian organizations also show that the country's steel sector is still experiencing growth in output and export despite the U.S. sanctions.

In its outlook plan for the Iranian calendar year 1404 (2025-2026) Iran has envisaged production of 55 million tons of steel per annum, and to achieve this target the country requires to produce 160 million tons of iron

Iran's turbulent auto market: will prices calm down?

1 → In early May, the head of Consumers and Producers Protection Organization, Abbas Tabesh was quoted by the press as saying that “According to statistics, [the country's] car production currently is about 760,000 and car imports are also banned; this insufficient production disrupts the supply and demand.”

Based on the Industry, Mining, and Trade Ministry data, the country's auto output stood at 831,334 in the previous Iranian calendar year of 1398 (ended on March 19) which was 13 percent less than its preceding year 1397.

Earlier this month, President Hassan Rouhani blamed “hoarders” and “web sites that release daily car prices” for the turbulence in the auto market and called on the authorities to deal with them.

The reduction in the value of the national currency and the problems caused by the U.S. sanctions, including rising raw material prices and the issues regarding the banking transactions over the past two years have been also mentioned as major factors that pushed the car prices up.

■ The solution(s)

The government has been introducing various methods of pricing and distribution for the country's auto industry, hoping to stabilize the market.

However, the ever-growing prices are



a clear indication that these methods have been doomed to failure and the issue must be dealt with from a more fundamental perspective.

There are three major factors contributing to the high prices of automobiles in Iran: one is the totalitarian power of the country's two major automakers that rule over 80 percent of the market, the second is the ban on the imports of foreign cars with the aim of supporting domestic production and finally the third factor is the weak auto parts sector which is not getting the support

it needs and deserves from the government.

For many years, experts and scholars have warned against the monopolization of the auto industry in Iran, however, the government has not been willing to listen, claiming to support domestic production.

Giving the sole power to the government-owned companies has deprived the market of the right of healthy competition and the result has been low-quality cars with skyrocketing prices.

According to Motameni, Iran Khodro and SAIPA are imposing their policies on

Foreign currency supply from NIMA up 48% in a week

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** – Supply of foreign currency by Iran's Forex Management Integrated System, locally known as NIMA, in the week ended on May 13, increased by 48 percent compared to the previous week, IRNA reported.

According to the data released by Central Bank of Iran (CBI), during the mentioned seven days NIMA and CBI supplied €313 million of foreign currency for the imports of basic goods, while the demand for foreign currency by the importers stood at only €133 million.

Earlier, the governor of the Central Bank had said that, given the gradual revival of the country's non-oil and oil exports following the partial containment of the coronavirus outbreak, the country's foreign exchange market will return to normal conditions.

Iran provides foreign currency for the country's exporters with significantly low exchange rates and the exporters are obliged to return the equivalent of the supplied fund in the form of foreign currency.

NIMA, which seeks to boost transparency, creates competitiveness among exchange shops and promotes a secure environment for traders, is a new chance for importers to supply their required foreign currency without specific problems and for exporters to re-inject their earned foreign currency to domestic forex market. It was inaugurated to allow exporters of non-oil commodities to sell their foreign currency earnings to importers of consumer products.

In late May 2019, CBI unveiled a directive package to provide the country's exporters with guidelines about how they should re-inject their foreign currency incomes into the country's economy.

Based on the directive, for the petrochemical sector, the exporters should present at least 60 percent of their foreign currency incomes into the domestic Forex Management Integrated System (NIMA), and a maximum 10 percent could be injected into the financial system in the form of hard currency and the rest could be used for importing



necessary goods.

As for other exporters, at least 50 percent of the total earnings should be presented at the NIMA system and a maximum 20 percent could be distributed in form of hard currency and the rest can be used for imports.

World stocks win a respite



here in Europe have opened higher as we come to the end of what is still likely to be the worst week for European stocks since early March.”

Analysts said this week's drop, while a natural correction after a rally since mid-March, also reflected growing concerns about rising U.S.-China tensions.

U.S. President Donald Trump on Thursday signaled a further deterioration of his relationship with China over the novel coronavirus, saying he has no interest in speaking to President Xi Jinping right now and suggesting he could even cut ties with Beijing.

“There is no doubt that the optics around the trade/diplomacy backdrop have worsened in the last week and this has had a negative influence,” said Chris Bailey, European strategist at Raymond James in London.

“There has also been a subtle change in the perceptions of market participants, for example the negative interest rate debate getting a very good airing in the United States.”

U.S. Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell has brushed off the notion that the Fed could push rates below 0% after futures tied to Fed interest rate policy expectations recently began pricing a small chance of sub-zero U.S. rates within the next year.

Two year U.S. Treasury yields are trading at just 0.15% US2YT=RR, while short-dated bond yields in Britain have dipped back below 0% this week GB2YT=RR.

Faced with an exceptional hit from the coronavirus crisis, central bankers are under intense pressure to do more to shore up battered economies.

The German economy contracted by 2.2% in the first quarter, its steepest three-month slump since the 2009 financial crisis as shops and factories were shut in March to contain the spread of the coronavirus, preliminary data showed on Friday.

Elsewhere, the dollar was a touch softer against major currencies. The euro was around 0.1% firmer at \$1.0815 EUR=EBS, while the dollar dipped 0.15% to 107.08 yen JPY=EBS. (Source: Reuters)

Reducing South Pars overhaul time saves Iran over \$55m

ENERGY TEHRAN — Director of Technical Inspection at South Pars Gas Complex says reducing the time of the complexes annual overhaul operations has saved the country 2.35 trillion rials (over \$55 million).

"One of the major achievements of the complex in the past few years has been the reduction of overhaul period which has resulted in more production and also more revenue," Alireza Barzegar told IRNA on Friday.

According to the official, this goal was achieved with the implementation of new supervision and inspecting methods in the complex' first to fifth refineries, and in collaboration with all the refinery's sectors, including operation, repairs and engineering.

Achieving the goal of implementing this new targeted inspection strategy in all of the

complex's refineries by the Iranian calendar year of 1404 (starts on March 2025) requires serious determination and cooperation of all relevant authorities along with all sectors of the refineries.

South Pars Gas Complex is comprised of 14 gas refineries in Southern Iran that are currently processing the gas extracted from the country's giant South Pars gas field which Iran shares with Qatar in the Persian Gulf.

The mentioned gas field covers an area of 9,700 square kilometers, 3,700 square kilometers of which, called South Pars, are in Iran's territorial waters. The remaining 6,000 square kilometers, called North Dome, are situated in Qatar's territorial waters.

The field, currently divided into 24 standard phases in the Iranian side, is estimated to contain a significant amount



of natural gas, accounting for about eight percent of the world's reserves, and approximately 18 billion barrels of condensate.

All the offshore operations of the development project of the field, except for phase 11, were completed in the past Iranian calendar year (ended on March 19).

Oil hits one-month high as signs of demand emerge amid coronavirus crisis

Oil prices jumped more than 3 percent on Friday, touching more than one-month highs amid signs that demand for crude was picking up with China reporting increased refinery runs, and rounding out a week of bullish news on the supply front.

Brent crude was up \$1.21 cents, or 3.9 percent at \$32.34 a barrel by 0707 GMT, after touching \$32.44 the highest since April 14. Brent rose nearly 7 percent on Thursday and is heading for a 3 percent gain for the week after rising the previous two weeks.

West Texas Intermediate (WTI) oil was up 92 cents, or 3.3 percent, at \$28.48 a barrel after reaching \$28.54, the highest since early April. WTI jumped 9 percent in the previous session and is also heading for a third weekly increase, up about 15 percent.

Amid supply cuts by the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and other major producers, bright spots are also emerging on the demand side. Data released on Friday showed China's daily crude oil use re-

bounded in April as refineries ramped up operations.

The market mood remains less than euphoric, though, with the coronavirus pandemic far from over and new clusters emerging in some countries where lockdowns have been eased.

"Market forces have aligned producers around the world to support fundamentals, and demand is increasingly showing signs of having troughed," Barclays analyst Amarpreet Singh said in a note.

"However, the sheer size and speed of the disruption and associated inventory overhang will take time to get fully absorbed, in our view," he said.

Barclays still raised its forecasts for Brent and WTI by \$5-\$6 a barrel for 2020 and by \$16 a barrel for 2021.

The International Energy Agency said it expects global crude inventories to fall by about 5.5 million barrels per day (bpd) in the second half of this year.

Meanwhile U.S. crude inventories fell after 15 weeks of declines, the Energy Information Administration said on Wednesday.

Output cuts will boost the trend towards lower inventories, but U.S. crude is unlikely to see strong gains.

"WTI crude will struggle to break above the \$30 level until both the economic outlook improves for the U.S. and some of the downside risks ease," said Edward Moya, senior market analyst at OANDA.

On the production side, OPEC and associated producers - collectively known as OPEC+ - had already agreed to cut output by a record of nearly 10 million bpd before Saudi Arabia this week extended its planned reductions for June, pledging to lower supply by nearly 5 million bpd.

Saudi Aramco, the world's largest oil exporter, reduced the volume of crude it will supply to at least three buyers in Asia by as much as 30 percent for June, three sources with knowledge of the matter told Reuters on Thursday.

OPEC+ now wants to extend overall production cuts beyond May and June when the group next meets, sources told Reuters earlier this week.

(Source: Reuters)

China crude oil runs rebound in April as fuel demand picks up

China's daily crude oil throughput rebounded in April from a 15-month low in March as refiners cranked up operations to meet renewed fuel demand after lockdowns imposed to prevent the spread of the coronavirus outbreak were eased.

The country processed a total of 53.85 million tons of crude oil last month, data from the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) showed on Friday, equivalent to about 13.1 million barrels per day (bpd). That was some 11 percent higher than 11.78 million bpd in March.

The agency said on Friday it had adjusted the database of industrial enterprises it uses to help compile a range of production numbers. On that basis, Friday April's crude oil throughput was 0.8 percent above the year-ago level, it said; a Reuters calculation using NBS data from last year put the rise at 3.4 percent.

"In terms of year-on-year percentage change, we only included the companies that existed in both years," a spokesperson from agency's media relations department told Reuters.

"For instance, if a company existed in 2019 but does not exist in 2020, then their figure in 2019 will not be included in 2020 year-on-year percentage calculation."

Analysts said it would not be surprising for the agency to revise its year-ago numbers.

"We've noticed over the years that the bureau tweaks the refinery output figures often towards end of the year due to under-reporting or delays in data providing by some plants," said Seng Yick Tee, senior director at consultancy SIA Energy.

Crude runs during the first four months of 2020 in China were 203.48 million tons,



according to Friday's official data, equal to 12.28 million bpd, representing a 3.4 percent drop from a year earlier.

Based on Reuters' calculations using numbers the bureau published last year, the January-April decline would have been 1.9 percent.

The country's gasoline and diesel consumption is expected to pick up in the second quarter as factories resume operations and travel restrictions are further relaxed.

Traffic congestion in big Chinese cities has exceeded levels before the coronavirus outbreak as commuters use more private cars to avoid public transport.

Amid the demand pickup, China's independent, or 'teapot' refineries were motivated to ramp up production to take advantage of high profit margins of \$70 yuan (\$122.63) a ton in April after crude oil prices dropped, Wang Zhao, an analyst at oil industry information consultant Sublime said, speaking before Friday's data release.

That "theoretical margin" is up from 759 yuan a ton in March, he said.

Meanwhile the monthly average capacity utilization rate at teapot refiners rose to a record 73 percent in April, according to data tracked by Sublime.

(Source: Reuters)

UAE's ADNOC CEO sees oil markets tightening due to producer cuts

Abu Dhabi National Oil Co, the UAE's biggest oil producer, is seeing signs that the oil market has tightened as cuts from OPEC+ and producers outside the coalition help rebalance the market, its CEO said.

"When it comes to oil, there are signs that the market has tightened in recent weeks," said Sultan al-Jaber on a webcast, according to an ADNOC statement on Friday. "The OPEC-plus agreement, voluntary cuts outside OPEC-plus plus, and production shut-ins are working together to start to rebalance the market. This will take time. As economies begin to open up, demand will follow, but the path to the next normal is not a straight line," said al-Jaber.

The 23-member OPEC+ is trimming a record 9.7 million bpd in May and June, to be followed by easing of curbs through April 2022.

Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Kuwait announced this week that they would cut an extra 1.18 million bpd in June on top of their OPEC+ commitments to support the oil market.

The UAE is pumping about 2.45 million bpd in May, down from a record 4.1 million bpd in April.

"We've been laser-focused on being one of the lowest-cost producers in the world," said al-Jaber, adding:

"And this has given us the flexibility and the resilience that we need at times like these."

Producers in countries outside OPEC+, such as the US and Norway, are also reducing output amid the surplus in the market.

Oil prices have risen in the past few weeks as countries across the world ease lockdowns, boosting consumption of some fuels.

The WTI June contract was trading up 1% at \$27.81/b at 2216 CST time, while Brent



was up 1.54% at \$31.61/b.

The oil market may start to rebalance quicker than originally anticipated, with the International Energy Agency Thursday pointing to deeper crude production cuts from OPEC+, US output falling faster than expected and modest signs of improving demand.

The Paris-based agency revised up its oil demand decline forecast to 8.6 million bpd compared with a fall of 9.3 million bpd last month, as a gradual easing of COVID-19 related restrictions on mobility help consumption.

The IEA estimated that non-OPEC output by April had fallen more than 3 million bpd since the start of the year and could reach 4 million bpd in June, with potentially more to come.

With the OPEC+ production cuts having come into effect on May 1, the IEA sees global supply in May down by an unprecedented 12 million bpd month on month.

The IEA estimated that crude oil output fell by as much as 630,000 bpd in April, and sees a further 1.2 million bpd decline in May. The agency predicts total US oil supply to drop 2.8 million bpd by year-end and 1.1 million bpd on average for 2020 compared with 2019, led by weakness in the Permian, the heart of the US shale industry.

(Source: Platts)

LNG price war could send natural gas into negative territory

Jousting for market share at a time of massive supply/demand imbalances was the key reason why oil markets recently entered uncharted waters after dipping into negative territory. Unfortunately, leading natural gas players could be contemplating the same folly as the oil protagonists.

Oil prices have staged an impressive recovery thanks to demand starting to bounce back as well as ongoing production cuts both by OPEC+ and IOCs in the U.S. and elsewhere.

However, the industry is far from being out of the woods. Whereas many oil punters now feel that negative prices are unlikely to happen again any time soon due to the developing tailwinds, CFTC recently fired a warning to brokers, exchanges, and clearinghouses that it actually remains a distinct possibility.

Natural gas markets risk treading the same path as oil. Hard hit by a double whammy of weak demand and storage nearing tank tops, Qatar, the world's biggest LNG producer, may very soon have to bite the bullet and curb output or risk cutting prices and finding itself in a battle for market share with the likes of Australia, U.S., Russia, and Norway.

■ Lose-lose proposition

Either way, it's a lose-lose proposition for Qatar, though the second option would be far more perilous for the LNG market, especially for U.S. exporters.

Qatar began sending its LNG exports to northwestern Europe

in February after the coronavirus pandemic engulfed its main Asian markets and crippled demand. However, it was not long before Europe itself started feeling the heat of the health crisis with demand sharply plummeting in April. The Persian Gulf state has now been forced to borrow a leaf from its oil brethren by storing its excess LNG cargoes--which the country's NOC, Qatar Petroleum, does at Belgium's Zeebrugge import terminal where it has booked all the import capacity till 2044.

But just like in the oil sector, LNG storage is quickly filling up with 17 LNG supertankers--more than normal at this stage of the year--currently idling off the emirates coast. Further, storing LNG is much more expensive--and therefore a much shorter-term solution--than storing crude oil due to the former's "boil-off" rate, which can lead to daily losses in the range of 0.07% to 0.15%.

Qatar's low LNG production costs, especially at its Ras Laffan plant, might tempt it to lowball the market by cutting prices. However, this is a very myopic maneuver that will only prolong the anguish, as we recently saw with Saudi Arabia and Russia. Cutting production, though, is likely to be equally painful for Qatar after it was forced to lower its crude exports from 21316 QAR Million in February to 15913 QAR Million in March due to the price collapse. Qatar, together with the next two LNG giants Australia and the U.S., have maintained a near-100% utilization rate through these tough times.

Qatar exited OPEC in January 2019 as it sought to play a more prominent role on the global scene. Though a member of Gas Exporting Countries Forum (GECF), the organization lacks the decisiveness of OPEC, usually preferring to take a hands-off approach.

■ Super Contango

But even deep production cuts at this juncture might not save natural gas prices in the near-term.

The LNG market is already in deep contango and quickly approaching super-contango. After a brief rally, natural gas prices have sunk to \$1.63/MMBtu with summer month futures contracts heavily discounted compared to winter contracts. The spread between June and July Nymex contracts now sits at 23.9 cents, the widest one-month discount for the front-end strip since October 2016. The deep discount is even more baffling, given that it's happening at the beginning of the injection season. Meanwhile, the discount for June vs. January 2021 contracts now stands at \$1.33, more than double the gap a year ago.

At this rate, a super-contango could be reached in a matter of weeks, which incentivizes traders to buy and stockpile the commodity. BloombergNEF has predicted that this could lead to all-time highs for U.S. inventory levels by the end of October and potentially test the working limit in the lower 48 states.

(Source: oilprice.com)

Australia's Reserve Bank fuels call for post-pandemic renewables push

Research by the Reserve Bank showing renewable energy investment fell sharply last year is fuelling calls for federal and state governments to back changes to help the industry rebound and drive a post-pandemic recovery.

Renewable energy surged to make up nearly 5 percent of non-mining business investment across Australia in 2018, according to the research note by RBA economists, but the number of large-scale clean projects reaching the point of commencement slumped about 50 percent last year.

Investment is expected to fall further over the next year or two, in part due to the national renewable energy target being filled and not replaced and challenges in integrating solar and wind farms in remote parts of the national grid.

The Morrison government has defended criticism of its response to the climate crisis in part by saying record levels of wind and solar power were added to the grid last year as investment in 2018 flowed through. It is yet to acknowledge the subsequent fall.

The note says the renewable energy industry had supported activity and employment, particularly in regional areas. While most components used in solar and wind farms are imported, the RBA found 25-40 percent of spending went to local suppliers in some cases, and manufacturing companies had reported stronger demand for locally produced electricity generation equipment.



The former Liberal leader John Hewson, now at the Australian National University's Crawford school of public policy and a director of an energy storage business, said the RBA had "gone out of its way to make a point" about the importance of renewable power to the economy.

"There's no doubt this is more than a nudge and wink. It is saying this is where we should be going," he said. "With Covid, it's even more important. It is an opportunity to take a long-term strategic view in the national interest and looking ahead to where the country should be going given its [solar and wind] assets."

The RBA note was published online on 19 March, before the impact of the Covid-19 imposed economic shutdown. Since the pandemic there has been a growing push internationally and in Australia for policymakers to use stimulus programs designed to help the economic recovery to also address the climate crisis.

Hewson said the renewable energy industry did not require subsidies, but needed improved regulations and a clear policy framework that made clear fossil fuels would be phased out and the country would move to low greenhouse gas emissions over the next three decades. With renewable energy cheaper than its fossil fuel competitors, he said the grid could run on 100 percent renewable energy well before 2050 with the right support.

Erwin Jackson, policy director with the Investor Group on Climate Change, said the RBA note showed renewable investment had been an important contributor to economic growth but had fallen, in part due to policy paralysis.

"The critical implication of the analysis is that the industry faces the risk of a boom-bust cycle," he said. "Governments can help stimulate new investment, and in turn new jobs and growth, by prioritizing a net zero emissions transition and clean energy plans in a sustainable recovery from Covid-19."

The RBA research echoes assessments by industry group the Clean Energy Council and consultants Bloomberg New Energy Finance, which both found investment in renewable energy projects was cut in half last year.

Alan Rai, a former senior economist at the RBA, now a director with consultancy Baringa Partners, said the central bank's focus on the scale and benefits of renewable energy spending was instructive. The bank had been concerned about the level of non-mining investment since the global financial crisis in 2008, he said.

"The fact that renewables have become such a big pipeline of non-mining investment and then fallen drew their attention," he said. "It is important to the country on a macroeconomic level."

The report found the longer-term outlook for clean energy investment was more positive, but would depend on government policy, electricity grid considerations and wholesale electricity prices holding up. Prices have fallen in recent months and are expected to stay low if the economic impact of the shutdown is extended.

Prof Frank Jotzo, director of ANU's Centre for Climate and Energy Policy, said the renewable energy boom has helped bring down electricity prices in the wholesale market and cut emissions. Electricity sector emissions were 7 percent lower in the first quarter than at the same in 2019.

But he said lower electricity prices meant lower revenue for renewable plants, and there were no longer sizeable subsidies. "If the Covid economic trouble turns into a prolonged recession, this could also pull the rug from under planned wind and solar power investments," he said.

"That means a risk that there may not be sufficient renewable power available to easily cover for the next coal plant shutting down. It also means that we would see an end to big annual emissions reductions from the power sector, making it harder to achieve the 2030 emissions target."

Jotzo said federal and state governments should step into the breach and contract for the construction of wind and solar parks in identified renewable energy zones.

"Public investments or financial guarantees for developments in the renewable energy zones are a safe bet, because we know that these investments will be needed, and they will be an excellent way to stimulate the economy, especially in the regions."

(Source: The Guardian)

First Announcement



IN THE NAME OF GOD
ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN BROADCASTING

INTERNATIONAL TENDER No: 99/103-04/03

Tender Holder:

ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN BROADCASTING (IRIB)

Subject of Tender:

Broadcasting the TV network of Hispan TV on Hispasat 1E Satellite (Latin America) for three years in accordance with the technical specification and other terms and conditions mentioned in the tender documents.

Deadline and how to receive the tender documents:

From **Sunday 17 May 2020 (1399/02/28)** until **Wednesday 20 May 2020 (1399/02/31)** by **04:00 p.m** with presentation of introductory letter by company or its representative and the receipt of paying the documents fee.

Place of receiving the tender document:

Interested participants may refer to purchasing (KALA) Dept. ,4th Floor of IRIB Administration Complex ,Hotel Esteghlal St. Vali –Assr Ave, Tehran, Iran

The fee of the tender documents and how to deposit it:

Submission of payment receipt for the amount of 1,000,000 Rials to account 4101029171204273 with BIC No.IR 310100004101029171204273 IRAN Central Bank in the name of IRIB.

Type and amount of guarantee for participation to tender:

The amount of deposit for participant in tender is USD 38000 fixed or its equivalent in Rials 6270000000 which should be in the form of Bank Guarantee.

Time and place of delivering Bidding Envelopes:

The sealed packages/envelopes should be submitted no later than **09:00 a.m.** on **Saturday 20 of June 2020 (1399/03/31)** and at the address mentioned in 4th clause.

Time and place of opening Qualification Evaluation envelopes:

The date of opening the Qualification Evaluation envelopes is on **Saturday 20 of June 2020 (1399/03/31)** at **10:00 a.m** in the office of International Purchasing .

Time and place of opening Envelopes:

The envelopes A of those eligible participants who meet the qualification criterion and approval of Technical and Commercial committee will be opened on **Sunday 21 June 2020** at **02:00 p.m (1399/04/01)** in the office of Financial Vice President .In case of complete content in the envelopes A the envelopes of B and C of eligible participants will be opened at the same time and place.
The participant must be qualified by the competent authorities.

For more information please see :

www.iriboffice.ir/tenders and http://iets.mporg.ir/ Tel: 00982122167053

Purchasing (Kala) Dept.,IRIB

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Prospects of normalization grim in Libya

Common understanding among foreign actors needed

By Salman Parviz

Analysts say that Libya is one of the most important crisis to watch for in 2020 because of the involvement of Russia and Turkey. More importantly the plight of the Libyans after almost 10 years of civil war cannot be ignored.

Jens Stoltenberg, head of NATO military alliance recently said in an interview that Turkey remains an important ally and NATO is ready to support GNA increasing the possibility of Russia and NATO locking horns.

Eight years after Libyan leader Colonel Muammar Gaddafi eliminated his country's weapons of mass destruction the colonel found himself in the wrong side of the gun, when he was overthrown and killed in 2011 submerging the country in a civil war.

NATO members led by Britain and France supported the so-called revolution by airstrikes – then watched as the country sank into chaos. Barrack Obama said leaving Libya without a plan after Gaddafi was the “biggest mistake” of his presidency.

There are fears that the global Covid-19 pandemic could devastate the war-torn Libya, where a decade long conflict has ravaged key infrastructure and created dire medical shortages.

Today the country is divided into two factions backed by foreign powers struggling to put the country together.

On the one side, there is the UN-recognized Government of National Accord (GNA) under Prime Minister Fayez Mustafa al-Sarraj in Tripoli supported by Turkey, Qatar and Italy. Turkey has deployed Syrian mercenaries.

Tripoli has been under siege by Libyan National Army (LNA) headed by Khalifa Haftar, who started his offensive on Tripoli in April, 2019. The offensive was launched while UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres arrived in Tripoli to prepare for a peace conference. Unsuccessful in taking Tripoli, Haftar has laid a siege on the capital city for the last four months.

The 76-year-old Libyan-born commander Haftar is supported by Russia, Egypt, France, Jordan, the United Arab Emirates and to a lesser extent Israel. Russia has sent mercenaries.

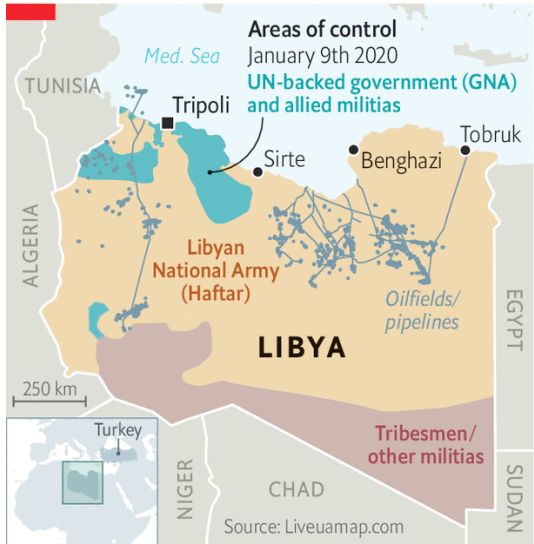
The Wall Street reported that prior to his April offensive on Tripoli, Haftar was in Riyadh where Saudis gave him tens of millions of dollars.

In his dominion Haftar is known as “the marshal”, and is the military ruler of eastern Libya, with Benghazi as his stronghold. He has promised to build a stable, democratic and secular Libya but the regions in his control are without any law and order and corruption abounds.

There were several summits by international community to put an end to the Libyan strife before Covid-19 pandemic sidelined the Libyan crisis.

The last summit was called the Berlin Conference was held January 19. Haftar and al-Sarraj didn't even meet face to face and the summit failed to yield results.

China has remained neutral in this conflict. Under the Gaddafi regime, China engaged in various infrastructure activities with 35,000 Chinese laborers working across 50 projects, ranging from residential and railway construction to telecommunications and hydropower ventures. The year leading to Gaddafi's overthrow, Libya was providing three percent of China's crude oil supply, constituting roughly 150,000 barrels a day. All of China's top state oil firms – CNPC, Sinopec group and CNOOC – had had standing infrastructure projects in Libya.



The Economist

In the outbreak of protests in 2011, China sought to preserve economic ties with Libya and rejected the NATO-led military intervention. China abstained at the UN Security Council vote to authorize military intervention.

In late 2015, the GNA emerged as the new political authority, the product of negotiations brokered by the United Nations and backed by China.

Although many Chinese projects were suspended in Libya and bilateral trade decreased by 57 percent, China's neutrality paved the way for Beijing to stand in good stead with GNA for years to come.

■ Immigrants crisis

Home to an estimated 654,000 migrants – more than 48,000 of them registered asylum seekers or refugees – many of them cramped conditions with little access to healthcare amidst the pandemic. An outbreak can be catastrophic.

Many live on transfers from friends and family and UNHCR handouts. With work hard to find many hope to proceed with their journey to Europe. Smugglers have put hundreds and thousands of them in boats and sent them across the Mediterranean to Italy.

UNHCR has been evacuating some of the most vulnerable refugees until airspace was shut in early April.

On May 13, WHO issued a joint statement on Libya emphasizing that the entire population of the country, especially some 400,000 Libyans that have been displaced – about half of them within the past year, since the attack on Tripoli -- are at risk of Covid-19 pandemic.

The statement reported every day challenges that humanitarian missions and workers face to carry on with their mission. The UN verified 113 cases of grave violations, including killing and maiming of children, attacks on schools and health facilities.

The report points out that as of May 13, there were 64 confirmed cases of Covid-19, including three deaths, in different parts of the country. This shows transmission of the disease is taking place and the risk of further escalation of outbreak is very high.

The report talks about food security and latest assessments show that most cities are facing shortages of basic food items coupled with an increase in prices, urging all parties to protect the water supply facilities that have been deliberately targeted.

“We look forward with anticipation to the pledged financial support to the Humanitarian Response Plan for Libya, as announced by the GNA,” WHO statement said.

■ Oil production

Oil reserves in Libya are the largest in Africa with 46.4 billion barrels as of 2010. Much of Libya's oil wealth is located in the east but the revenues are channeled through Tripoli-based state oil firm National Oil Corporation (NOC), which says it serves the whole country and stays out of its factional conflicts.

Prior to the 2011 Libyan civil war Libya produced over 1.5 million barrels a day. As a result of a blockade of export terminals by LNA by February of this year oil production dropped to 200,000 barrels a day reports Bloomberg. NOC said the North African state's current level of production is at 91,221 barrels per day as of March 17.

In order to choke GNA from the crucial crude export revenue the LNA seized Libya's export terminals and ports in the east in mid-January. The blockade has cost Libya some \$560 million, Petroleum Economist reported in January.

According to NOC, the blockade has plunged production from around 1.2 million barrels a day and added losses had surpassed four billion dollars by April 15.

■ Conflict wages

In the last couple of weeks, significant developments have been happening in the Libyan civil war.

In an interview with Italian daily La Repubblica, Jens Stoltenberg, head of NATO military alliance said that Turkey remains an important ally and NATO is ready to support GNA. He stressed NATO is supporting UN's efforts for peaceful solution to conflicts both in Libya and Syria.

Meanwhile, the independent English language Tripoli-based Libyan Express reported that Haftar launched a rocket attack Thursday on Tripoli, hitting the Central Hospital on other downtown areas.

Tripoli Central Hospital and some civilian areas were targeted. GNA's Health Ministry said 14 civilians were injured, adding that the hospital will not be able to serve people due to the attack pointing out what a massive setback this was amid the outbreak of Coronavirus.

Libyan military forces said Monday that the Libyan army struck forces loyal to Haftar in Al-Watiya airbase in southwest of Tripoli during the government-led Operation Volcano of Rage.

LNA has intensified attacks on civilians since the beginning of May as GNA made substantial military progress in the offensive in the western part of Tripoli. Armed drones provided by Turkey conducted effective attacks against the LNA.

Libyan Interior Minister Fathi Bashaghe has accused Haftar's forces had used chemical weapons on the Salah Al-Deen front, south of Tripoli. The accusations were confirmed by Canadian journalist Amru Saleheddine, who found several government soldiers with symptoms to those of epilepsy, usually caused by nerve gas.

The conflict in Libya is backed by foreign actors with different objectives and priorities. Any emerging power configuration will be fragile unless the external actors come to a shared understanding.

Israeli-U.S. policy towards Palestine pays no attention to international law, UN authority

By Mohammad Jafari

Israel's insistence on occupying more Palestinian lands in the West Bank as well as the U.S.-planned Deal of the Century have jointly paved the way for the land theft without paying any attention to international law, world public opinion and the UN-approved Fourth Geneva Convention's details.

Richard Falk, an Albert G Milbank Professor Emeritus of International Law at Princeton University and Research Fellow and also a former UN Special Rapporteur on Palestinian human rights, has explained that the Israeli plan to annex parts of the occupied West Bank shows a shocking disregard for international law.

“Lives all over the planet are being torn apart either by the COVID-19 pandemic or as a result of its devastating social and economic dislocations. In such a moment, it is hardly surprising that the best and worst of humanity is being showcased,” wrote in his commentary published by Al Jazeera.

Yet what seems worse beyond even these forebodings is the persistence of gangster geopolitics in its various manifestations.

Intensifying United States sanctions in the midst of the health crisis on already deeply afflicted countries such as Iran and Venezuela is one striking example. This display of the primacy of geopolitics is highlighted by its rejections of numerous high-profile humanitarian appeals for the suspension of sanctions, at least for the duration of the pandemic. Instead of suspension and empathy, we find a tone-deaf Washington almost gleefully upping its “maximum pressure” policy, perversely grabbing the opportunity to ratchet up the pain level.

Another dark tale is the macabre Israeli dance around the disruptive lawlessness of the annexation of parts of the occupied West Bank promised by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

The insistence that any annexation of occupied Palestinian territory directly violates fundamental norms of international law seems no longer to be taken seriously. Maybe because of this, Israel is poised to annex without even attempting to offer legal justifications for overriding the widely endorsed and rigidly interpreted rule that a sovereign state is not allowed to annex foreign

territory acquired by force.

This instance of annexation additionally involves an extreme repudiation of international humanitarian law as embodied in the Fourth Geneva Convention. It amounts to a unilateral move by Israel to change the status of land in the West Bank from that of occupied since 1967 to that of its sovereign territorial authority. And further, such contemplated annexation directly challenges the authority of the United Nations, which by an overwhelming continuous consensus regards Israel's presence in the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and Gaza as solely based on force and occupation, making any modification dependent on a prior authoritative expression of Palestinian consent, which is hard to imagine ever being given.

For all these reasons it is not surprising that even Israeli heavyweights, including former heads of Mossad and Shin Bet, as well as retired army officers are sounding the alarm. Of course, none of these Israeli internal debates objects to annexation because it violates international law, rejects UN or European Union authority, and ignores Palestinian inalienable rights.

All the objections to annexation from within Israel are couched by exclusive reference to a variety of concerns about alleged negative impacts on Israeli security. In particular, these critics from within Israel's national security establishment are worried about disturbing Arab neighbors and further alienating international public opinion, especially in Europe, and to some extent the critics worry about weakening the solidarity of American and European Jews for Israel.

The pro-annexation side of the Israeli policy debate also mentions security considerations, especially with respect to the Jordan Valley and the settlements, but much less so. Unlike the critics, the more ardent proponents of annexation are land claimants.

They invoke a Jewish biblical entitlement to Judea and Samaria (known internationally as the West Bank). This entitlement is reinforced by referencing Jewish deep cultural traditions and centuries of historical connections between a small Jewish presence and this land held sacred.

As with Israeli critics of annexation, supporters feel no need to explain, or even notice, the disregard of Palestinian grievances and rights.

Annexionists do not dare put forward an argument that the Jewish claims are more deserving of recognition than are the competing national claims of Palestinians, undoubtedly because their case is so weak in terms of modern ideas of law and the ethics of entitlement.

As has been the case throughout the Zionist narrative, Palestinian grievances, aspirations, and even the existence of a Palestinian people is not part of the Zionist imaginary except as political obstacles and demographic impediments.

At the same time, all along Zionism has been tactically opportunistic about disclosing the full extent of its project, instead focusing on what it could gain under a given set of circumstances as all that it wanted.

When one considers the evolution of the main drift of Zionism since its inception, the longer-term aspiration of marginalizing Palestinians in a single dominant Jewish state that encompassed the whole of Israel's “promised land” has never been forsaken. In this sense the UN partition plan - while accepted as a solution at the time - is better understood as a stepping stone to recovering as much of the promised land as possible. In the course of the last 100 years, from a Zionist perspective utopia became reality, while for the Palestinians reality became dystopia.

How the prelude to annexation is being addressed by Israel and the U.S. is as dismaying as the underlying erasure of the Palestinians, who will be cast out as a restive population to be kept fragmented and as disunited as possible so that their resistance and objections can be efficiently muted.

Netanyahu managed to secure approval for his annexation plan in the unity government deal with his rival-turned-coalition-partner, Benny Gantz. The only precondition for the proposal he is set to submit after July 1 was conforming the contours of the annexation to the territorial allocations embodied in the notoriously one-sided “Peace to Prosperity” proposal put forward by the Trump administration.

Even without the disclosure of the Trump peace plan, U.S. tacit approval for annexation was hardly ever in doubt. It follows from Trump's endorsement of Israel's annexation of the occupied Syrian territory of the Golan Heights in March 2019.

As could be expected, Donald Trump's Amer-

ica is creating no friction, not even whispering to Netanyahu at least to offer legal justifications or explain away the negative effects of annexation on Palestinian peace prospects. Instead, the U.S. Secretary of State, Mike Pompeo, gave a green light to West Bank annexation even before Israel formalized its claim, declaring provocatively that annexation is a matter for the Israelis to determine on their own (as if neither Palestinians nor international law had any relevance). He added that the U.S. will convey its opinions privately to the government of Israel.

In the undisclosed background, the callousness of the annexation initiative seems designed to neuter the UN and blunt international criticism of Israel. It is expected that the annexation will be greeted by strong rhetoric of denunciation from several European leaders and possibly the presumptive Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden, but unaccompanied by any serious push for an international campaign to reverse this taking of Palestinian land.

On the basis of past experience, it seems likely that after a few days of media coverage, concerns will subside, and the world will move on. Even the Palestinians, discouraged by years of fruitless waiting, seem to be suffering, at least temporarily, from a combination of resistance fatigue and ineffectual solidarity initiatives.

Such an assessment is one more sign that Israeli-U.S. relations are being managed in accord with “gangster geopolitics”, and without paying heed to international law or UN authority. It is a despicable act that sweeps law and morality aside while political space is forcibly cleared for land theft.

It follows an incredible pattern of official behavior both in the U.S. and Israel.

First, there is the defiant nature of the Israeli annexation claim. Secondly, there is the single qualification that Israel must obtain a geopolitical stamp of approval from the U.S. government before going forward with annexation. Thirdly, there is the U.S. government's move to throw the ball back to Israel by saying the decision to annex is Israel's to make, yet it will give Israel the benefit of its private opinion on the matter, presumably on the tactics of timing and presentation, without any consideration of matters of principle.

Experts necessitate elimination of all nuclear weapons

Deployment of nearly 15,000 nuclear weapons in certain countries, unreliable safety system in nuclear sites, possibility of cyber attacks on the sites and emotionally unstable rulers' threats have altogether necessitated the elimination of entire nuclear arms across the world if the humankind still intends to live on the earth, experts warned.

Sergio Duarte, a former United Nations High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, and Ira Helfand, a past president of Physicians for Social Responsibility, have expressed, in a joint article published by the Common Dreams, their concerns over the safety of nuclear power plants and sites as well as unstable rulers who possess atomic weapons.

“Just as the threat of the new coronavirus must be met by cooperation, common-sense and solidarity among peoples and nations,” wrote the authors, adding the same or even more attention should be paid to narrow down the danger of a nuclear war.

The entire international community is justifiably concerned and disturbed with the serious consequences of the novel coronavirus pandemic. Thousands have already died and many more are in danger. Local and national governments find it increasingly difficult to deal adequately with the sanitary and social emergency deriving from the spread of the virus. It will take many months before the situation can come back to normal.

In the current climate of fear, uncertainty and helplessness, it is impossible not to think about what would happen in the case of a different and more ominous disaster: a nuclear conflagration, albeit of limited proportions. The possessors of nuclear weapons are relentlessly increasing the destructive power of their arsenals and seem willing to use them as they see fit to respond to their perceived security concerns. This, in fact, brings insecurity to all. Command and control systems are not immune against cyber viruses and accidents, nor are they protected against whimsical or emotionally unstable rulers.

An all-out nuclear exchange would turn whole cities and vast areas into a flaming inferno. Hundreds of millions of people would perish instantly and many more would die in the following days and weeks from radiation and other harmful effects. The consequences, however, would not be confined to the immense loss of lives, destruction of buildings and transportation networks and disruption of medical, financial and communications systems, as well as other vital structures.

The current year will mark 75 years since the razing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki with the use of just two relatively small explosive devices. Today, the detonation of a mere fraction of the nearly 15,000 nuclear weapons existing in the world would spread millions of tons of smoke, soot and debris throughout the stratosphere and create a dense layer that would surround the planet for many years, perhaps for decades, blocking and absorbing sunlight. This so-called “nuclear winter” would cause extremely low temperatures and other climatic changes, destroying agriculture. The collapse of land and marine ecosystems would make food production impossible. Survivors of such bombings would simply starve.

Humankind cannot remain oblivious of this persisting danger to its own survival.

Three international conferences on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons, in 2013 and 2014, concluded that irrespective of its cause, the impact of nuclear detonations will not be limited to national boundaries but would cause deep, lasting and potentially irreversible harm to the environment, human health and well-being, as well as to socioeconomic development and social order, threatening the very survival of our species. Furthermore, no country, group of countries or international organization would be able to deal adequately with the humanitarian emergency resulting from an atomic explosion in an inhabited region.

As long as nuclear weapons exist, the danger of their use will also exist. The only guarantee against such use is the complete elimination of these weapons.

In order to help avert such a disaster a comprehensive prohibition of all nuclear test explosions (CTBT) was concluded in 1996, but its full entry into force still awaits signature or ratification by eight states. More recently, in 2017, 122 countries negotiated and adopted a treaty to prohibit nuclear weapons (TPNW). 81 states already signed and 36 have ratified it. Fourteen more ratifications are necessary for it to take effect. As the current emergency inspires us to reflect more soberly about survival risks and threats, the full entry into force of these instruments loom large as urgent unfinished business.

Both those Treaties uphold and reinforce the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), usually considered the cornerstone of the nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament régime. It is fair to say that the NPT has truly contributed to limit actual and prospective proliferators to the current overall number of nine. However, the highest goal that inspires the Treaty—a world free from nuclear weapons—remains unfulfilled.

It may well be impossible to eliminate all disease-causing viruses; yet nuclear disarmament is not only possible, but a legally binding obligation embedded in Article VI of the NPT. Fifty years after the Treaty's inception, it is high time for the possessors of nuclear weapons to effectively comply with this obligation. As with viruses, containment may be good, but eradication is best.

The U.S. atomic attack on Japan in 1945 is the blatant evidence which can simply justify the authors' concerns.

Some 140,000 people were killed in 1945 atomic bomb raid on Hiroshima, with another 74,000 bombed to death later in Nagasaki.

Some died immediately while others succumbed to injuries or radiation-related illnesses weeks, months and years later. Japan is the only country to have suffered atomic attacks, in 1945.

Japanese officials have criticized the UN Nuclear Weapon Ban Treaty as deepening a divide between countries with and without nuclear arms.

None of the nine countries that possess nuclear weapons took part in the negotiations or vote on the treaty.

Many in Japan feel the attacks amount to war crimes and atrocities because they targeted civilians and due to the unprecedented destructive nature of the weapons.

But many Americans believe they hastened the end of a bloody conflict, and ultimately saved lives, thus justifying the bombings.



Centuries-old polo field discovered in western Iran

TOURISM TEHRAN — A centuries-old Chogan (polo) field, filed with stone gates, one of which bearing a dedicatory inscription, has recently been found near a village in Iran's western Lorestan province, provincial tourism chief has announced.

"Significant architectural and historical elements from the first Chogan field in Lorestan, which is the third in the country, have been obtained during a round of archeological and anthropological studies recently conducted in Aligudarz," CHTN quoted Seyyed Amin Qasemi as saying on Wednesday.



The horse-riding game, traditionally played in royal courts and urban fields and accompanied by music and storytelling, won the UNESCO world heritage status in December 2017. In Chogan, two rider teams compete and the aim is to pass a ball through the opposing team's goal post using a wooden stick. The bearers of the game include Choganbazan (the athletes), storytellers (Naqqals, Morsheds, etc.) and musicians, according to a dossier submitted to the UNESCO on March 31, 2016.

"The unearthed architectural elements include four standing stone mills, which are related to the gates of the Choogan field, one of which has inscriptions in Persian," Qasemi added.

"This Chogan field is located in the village of Khalil Abad on the slopes of Qali Kooch and Oshtrankooch, which are aimed to be added to the tourist spots of the province in the future due to their proximity to Ab-e Sefid and Shoul-Abad waterfalls."

Talking to the CHTN, archaeologist Ata Hassanpour said "The inscription discovered on the stone masonry body of the gates of the Choogan field, And it includes four shutters of Persian poetry, which dates back to 1116 AH [1704 - 1705 CE] and coincides with the middle of the Safavid era."

"The inscription shows that Yahya ibn Yusuf, the grandson of Khalil Khan Sarlak, one of the famous Bakhtiari rulers in the Safavid period, founded a mansion in this area overlooking the polo field and the well-carved stones left over from the mansion, which are now scattered around, testifies the glory of this building [in its hey-day]."

Elsewhere in his remarks, Hassanpour, pointed out that there is a similar example of these stone mills in Isfahan's Naghsh-e Jahan Square, (the UNESCO-registered Imam Sq.), which is the oldest Chogan field in the world, adding "After counterpart in Isfahan and Qazvin, this is the third polo field in Iran."

"We will reopen Safavid studies in Lorestan and Iran, and we will soon provide additional and detailed information in this regard to those who are interested," the archaeologist concluded.

Chogan is a sporting team game with horses and a version of the modern polo game. From time immemorial it was considered an aristocratic game and held in a separate field, on specially trained horses. Nowadays, chogan is played in Iran, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Azerbaijan.

Polo was invented and first played in Iran (or ancient Persia) thousands of years ago. The original name of polo is "Chogan" and in Iran the game is still referred to as "Chogan".

From its Iranian origins in Persia it spread to Constantinople, and eastward through Bactria and Afghanistan to Tibet, China, and Japan, and from Tibet to India, where it flourished throughout the Mughal (Mogul) dynasty. The word "polo" comes from the Tibetan word for the willow root from which polo balls were made of, which is "Pulu".

Polo is said to be the world's first team sport, the world's first ball game, and today is recognized as the world's fastest team sport and ball game. The first recorded game took place in 600 BC, in Ancient Persia. Throughout history, the game has been popular among generals, warriors, princes, and kings as a means of training cavalry for warfare.

Iranian police seize historical objects from smuggler

HERITAGE TEHRAN — A number of historical objects have recently been confiscated from a smuggler in Neyshabur, northeastern Khorasan Razavi province, a senior police official in charge of protecting cultural heritage said on Thursday, CHTN reported.

The recovered objects include some pottery utensils as well as ancient coins, Mohammad-Ali Modir said.

The official, however, did not refer to the exact age of the relics.

The culprit was detained and surrendered to the judicial system for further investigation, he noted.



Situated some 70 km west of Mashhad, Neyshabur was founded around the third century CE. Experts say, that "Nishapur" derived its name from its alleged founder, the Sasanian king Shapur I (d. 272).

It grew to prominence in the eighth century and was ruined by invasions and earthquakes in the thirteenth century. After that time, a much smaller settlement was established just north of the ancient town.

Hundreds of objects were discovered in several excavations by a team from the Metropolitan Museum in 1940s.

Nowadays, Neyshabur produces cereals and cotton, and the town's industries include agricultural marketing and the manufacture of carpets and pottery. Neyshabur is linked by road and railway with Tehran and Mashhad.

Isfahan reopens tourist sites as coronavirus restrictions ease

→ 1 It's a city for walking, getting lost in its mazing bazaars, dozing in beautiful gardens, and meeting people.

The city has long been nicknamed as Nesf-e-Jahan which is translated into "half the world"; meaning seeing it is relevant to seeing the whole world. In its heyday it was also one of the largest cities in the region with a population of nearly one million.

Isfahan is renowned not only for the abundance of great historical bridges, but also for its 'life-giving river', the Zayandeh-Rood, which has long bestowed the city an original beauty and a fertility. The cool blue tiles of Isfahan's Islamic buildings, and the city's majestic bridges, contrast perfectly with the encircling hot, dry Iranian countryside.

The huge Imam Square, best known as Naghsh-e Jahan Sq. (literary meaning "Image of the World"), is one of the largest in the world (500m by 160m), and a majestic example of town planning. Built in early 17th century, the UNESCO-registered square is punctuated with the most interesting sights in Isfahan.

Modern Isfahan is now home to some heavy industry, including steel factories and a nuclear facility on its outskirts, however its inner core wants to be preserved as a priceless gem.



Zanjan province to boost tourism infrastructure

HERITAGE TEHRAN — Five tourism-related projects are scheduled to be completed across the northwestern Zanjan province in the current Iranian calendar year (started March 20), provincial tourism chief has said.

The projects will be inaugurated by late August to boost tourism industry in the region and generate jobs, CHTN quoted Amir Arjmand as saying on Thursday.

The projects, which include two roadside welfare services in Zanjan city, a roadside welfare service and an eco-lodge unit in Tarom city and an eco-lodge unit in Mahneshan city, will be implemented by the private sector, he added.

He also noted that with the completion of these projects, some 70 job opportunities in the field of tourism will



be created.

Zanjan is one of the cities founded by Sassanid King Ardashir I (180-242 CE). The province makes a base for wider explorations with the architectural wonder of Soltaniyeh, the subterranean delights of the Katala-Khor caves, colorful mountains and the UNESCO-registered Takht-e Soleiman ruins are nearby.

In late January, Zanjan was designated as a "world city of filigree" by the World Crafts Council after the WCC assessors visited various craft workshops, stores, exhibits and bazaars of city in a two-day itinerary in last December.

Filigree consists of curling, twisting, or plaiting fine, pliable metal threads and soldering them at their points of contact with each other with a metal groundwork.

Over 100 relics restored in Chaharmahal-Bakhtiari

HERITAGE TEHRAN — Some 114 historical objects have been restored by teams of cultural heritage experts and restorers in the southwestern Chaharmahal-Bakhtiari province, provincial tourism chief has said.



Moreover, six historical monuments, including Khan Bathhouse, Sar-Aqa Seyyed village, and Hafizi mansion underwent restoration during the previous Iranian calendar year 1398 (ended March 20), Merhrdad Javadi said on Thursday, CHTN reported.

A budget of 6.4 billion rials (about \$150,000) was allocated to the restoration projects, which aimed at preserving, protecting, and strengthening the historical sites, he added.

He also noted that the number of visitors to the province's museums grew by 23 percent during the past year compared to the year earlier.

However, in the current year, the province's museums are still on lockdown due to coronavirus outbreak in the country, he concluded.

Chaharmahal-Bakhtiari has various unique traditions and rituals relative to the 'tribal' life-styles. Special forms of music, dance, and clothing are noteworthy. It has a considerable potential to become a vibrant tourist attraction because of its changing natural landscape.

The province is also a hub for making wool felt products, majority of which exported abroad. It is home to some 500 crafters, in over 250 workshops, making handmade felt products.

Currently about 40 tons to felt are yearly being made in Chaharmahal-Bakhtiari through traditional and modern manners, which could be increased to 50 tons, according to official data. Experts believe that the province's capital Shahr-e Kord has potential to be a world city for felt products.



Friday, May 15, 2020

Memorandum No: 0001

Department: Corporate Office - Sales & Marketing

Hotels: Espinas Palace Hotel
Espinas Boulevard
Espinas Astara

Subject: Central Room Reservations

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F: **+98 21 75675365 / 355**

E: **sales@espinahotels.com**

If you have any clarifications and need further information, please contact:

Norman Eleazar

Corporate Director – Sales & Marketing

Espinas Hotel Group

norman.eleazar@espinahotels.com

With thanks & best regards,

Mohammad Amiri

Member of the Board

Measures to revive Lake Urmia ‘an example to inspire us all’: Gary Lewis

ENVIRONMENT d e s k **TEHRAN** — Gary Lewis, director for disasters and conflicts at the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), praised Iran for measures taken to revive the Lake Urmia.

“As I said when serving in Iran, to every human-made problem, there exists a human-made solution. Work still remains to be done, but what has recently happened in Lake Urmia is an example to inspire us all. All hands count,” Lewis wrote on his Twitter account on Thursday.

Lewis has been a representative and coordinator of the United Nations in Tehran since 2013, and after five years, on January 15, 2018, his mission ended.

Farhad Sarkhosh, head of the Lake Urmia Restoration Program’s office in West Azarbaijan province said that the lake’s level has reached 1,271 meters and 87 centimeters, which is 37 centimeters higher than the last year’s level.

The lake’s water volume was estimated at more than 4.620 billion cubic meters, which indicates an increase of 1.010 billion cubic meters compared to the last year.

He went on to say that Lake Urmia’s surface area has now reached more than 3,093 square kilometers, adding that the figure has



increased by 244 square kilometers compared to the same period last year.

According to the latest statistics of the Meteorological Organization, since the beginning of this water year, West Azarbaijan province received 339.8 millimeters of rain, which demonstrates an increase of 58.6 percent compared to the long-term average.

The above normal levels of rain came to help conservation measures to preserve the Lake Urmia which have now increased by 37 centimeters compared to [the Iranian calendar month of Farvardin (March 19- April 18)] last year.

This is while Lake Urmia still needs 9.5 billion cubic meters of water to reach its

ecological level of 1274.10.

Shared between West Azarbaijan and East Azarbaijan provinces in northwestern Iran, Lake Urmia, was once the largest salt-water lake in West Asia. It was home to many migratory and indigenous animals including flamingos, pelicans, egrets, and ducks and attracted hundreds of tourists every year who had bathed in the water to take advantage of the therapeutic properties of the lake.

However, decades of long-standing drought spells and elevated hot summer temperatures that speed up evaporation as well as increased water demands in the agriculture sector shrank the lake drastically. In 1999 the volume of water which was at 30 billion cubic meters drastically decreased to half a billion cubic meters in 2013. Moreover, the lake surface area of 5,000 square kilometers in 1997 shrunk to one-tenth of that to 500 square kilometers in 2013.

These days, life has returned to Lake Urmia. The lake now has so much water that tourists can swim in its shiny water and birds and aquatic species such as flamingos and Artemia have returned to it, but it still has a long way to completely survive.

Health ministry gets \$995m to counter COVID-19

SOCIETY d e s k **TEHRAN** — The Ministry of Health has received 41 trillion rials (over \$995 million at the official rate of 42,000 rials) to combat the coronavirus pandemic throughout the country, IRNA news agency reported on Friday.

The payment of financial resources required by the country’s health sector has been the main priority of the Ministry

of Economic Affairs and Finance.

The number of people diagnosed with coronavirus in Iran reached 116,635 on Friday, of whom 6,902 have died and 91,836 recovered so far.

Over the past 24 hours, 2,102 new cases of people having the virus have been identified, and 48 died, Deputy Health Minister Kianoush Jahanpour said.

Rainfall in Iran 33% higher than long-term average

1 → The average long-term rainfall in Hormozgan province is reported 93.6 mm, which shows that this year’s precipitation has increased by 205.5 percent, he highlighted.

Almost all the provinces experienced increased rainfall compared to the long term average, except for Chaharmahal-Bakhtiari, Kohgiluyeh-Boyerahmad and Kermanshah. Yazd, South Khorasan and Semnan provinces recorded the lowest rainfall among the whole provinces.

During the aforementioned period, 343.6 mm of rain doused Tehran, which shows a 23.5 and 9.1 percent increase compared to both long run and last year, respectively.

■ Is increased rainfall always a good sign?

Fluctuation in precipitations amounts received in some provinces in the beginning of the crop year is one of the main signs of climate change in the country which not only result in an increase in water resources but it would lead to recurrent destructive floods in the regions.

Some provinces that have been struggling with low rainfall faced above normal rainfall during the same period last year



or in the long run, while some others that have always been meeting above-normal averages are facing shortages.

Climate disruption or global climate disruption, is the new term scientists are using to explain the extreme fluctuations that can and will occur to our weather systems as anthropogenic-caused carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases increase in our atmosphere, the oceans get warmer, and weather events go wild.

The report regrets that climate disruption will be continuing as climate change is on the rise and it calls on taking proper and effective measures to alleviate the adverse effects of climate change on the country.

Neon waves caused by algae make ocean glow in California

A mesmerising neon light show has been glowing along the shores of Southern California.

The phenomenon is caused by colonies of algae, simple plants that live in water, which bloomed in March along a stretch of coastline from Baja to Los Angeles.

During the day millions of algae, called dinoflagellates, appear as a reddish-brown colour on the ocean’s surface known as a “red tide” and give off an unpleasant, sulphur-like odour as it decays.

“Red tides” pop up all over the world but not all provide dazzling neon displays when night falls.

When the mass of dinoflagellates are mixed up by waves or larger ocean life, a chemical reaction involving enzyme luciferase and compound luciferin produced by the algae is what causes bioluminescence, the creation of light by a living organism.

Some red tides produce dangerous toxins which can be deadly to mammals and fish but the California algal blooms are not poisonous, instead acting as a food source.



Harmful algal blooms (HABs) occur when algae grow out of control and scientists suggest that they are increasing in number along coastlines. Not only can they cause harm to marine life but, in rare cases, can affect human health, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

Although HABs occur along every state’s coastline, perhaps the best known “red tide” appears almost every summer along Florida’s Gulf Coast. NOAA monitors the phenomenon in the hopes of giving communities better predictions of when a “red tide” might appear, the Independent reported.

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

A ← → ع

Miankaleh peninsula faces serious risk of disappearing

Hossein Ali Ebrahimi, head of Mazandaran province department of department, has said that almost 20 percent of the peninsula’s wetlands have dried up.

Drought spell and climate change are two of the key factors contributing to the Miankaleh peninsula dryness, YJC quoted Ebrahimi as saying on Wednesday.

Unfortunately, the province of Mazandaran has also been negatively affected by climate change and less precipitation has increased the peninsula water deficits, Ebrahimi said, stating that additionally mismanagement, unsustainable agricultural practices, and severe depletion of the wells and groundwater resources have exacerbated Miankaleh peninsula’s condition.

تالاب میانکاله در معرض خشکی کامل

حسین علی ابراهیمی مدیر کل محیط زیست استان مازندران ۲۰ درصد از تالاب میانکاله کاملاً خشک شده است.

به گزارش روز چهارشنبه باشگاه خبرنگاران جوان ابراهیمی ادامه داد: تغییرات اقلیم شده و خشکسالی نیز بر این تالاب تأثیر گذار گفت: متأسفانه استان مازندران نیز مانند سایر استان‌های کشور درگیر تغییرات اقلیم شده و خشکسالی نیز بر این استان تأثیر گذار بوده است به همین دلیل قسمتی تالاب میانکاله کاملاً خشک شده است. وی در ادامه افزود: علاوه بر تغییرات اقلیمی و کمبود نزولات آسمانی، نبود مدیریت صحیح منابع آبی برداشت غیرمجاز از چاه‌ها و و منع آب زیرزمینی و کشاورزی ناپایدار در منطقه، وضعیت این تالاب بحرانی است.

PREFIX/SUFFIX

“-ization, -isation”

■ **Meaning:** a word ending that indicates process or result

■ **For example:** The **characterization** is believable, but it’s still not a very good book.

PHRASAL VERB

Gnaw (away) at somebody/something

■ **Meaning:** to make someone feel worried or frightened, over a period of time

■ **For example:** Something was gnawing at the back of his mind.

IDIOM

A breeze

■ **Meaning:** say that something was a breeze means that it was very easy or that everything went smoothly

■ **For example:** The interview was a breeze - barely 10 minutes and I got the job!

Thousands of tonnes of ocean microplastics blowing ashore every year

Hundreds of thousands of tonnes of ocean plastic pollution could be blowing back to shore with the sea breeze every year, according to a new study.

Researchers discovered that microplastics could be ejected from the water with sea spray, released into the atmosphere and blown with the wind back onto land.



Plastic wrecks havoc on marine ecosystems. As plastic swirls around in the water, much of it breaks down to tiny pieces, called micro-plastics.

The study was conducted by the University of Strathclyde in Scotland and Observatoire Midi-Pyrénées at CNRS-University of Toulouse, France. The results were published in journal PLoS One earlier this week.

A pilot study analysed microplastics in sea spray at Mimizan beach, located in Aquitaine, on the south-west Atlantic coast of France.

For a week, researchers used a “cloud catcher” machine which captured water droplets to examine for microplastics in a variety of conditions including storm and sea fog.

The study found plastic fragments from 5 -140 micrometres in the air. It showed that microplastics could be tossed by the process of “bubble burst ejection” and “wave action” in strong winds or choppy seas.

The most plastic particles were ejected during a sea fog generated by the surf.

Previous studies found microplastic pollution in the Pyrenees which revealed ocean pollution can travel long distances with the wind.

Steve Allen, a Strathclyde PhD candidate who co-led the study, said: “Sea breeze has traditionally been considered ‘clean air’ but this study shows surprising amounts of microplastic particles being carried by it.

“It appears that some plastic particles could be leaving the sea and entering the atmosphere along with sea salt, bacteria, viruses and algae.

“Bubble ejection of particles is a well-known phenomenon but we have now shown that microplastic is also being ejected from the sea. To date, there has been no consideration of the oceans as an atmospheric microplastic source.

“We keep putting millions of tonnes of plastic into the ocean every year, this research shows that it is not going to stay there forever.”

The Ocean Conservancy discovered that many fish species consume plastics debris, confusing it for real food and estimated that at least 600 different wildlife species are threatened by the pollution.

There is also a human health risk from plastic entering the food chain with nearly a billion people around the world consuming seafood as their primary source of protein, the Independent reported.

WORDS IN THE NEWS

Arnie: from bodybuilder to Governor

(October 08, 2003)

Arnold Schwarzenegger has become the new governor of California in the United States of America. This continues the upward rise of Schwarzenegger’s career. But how did he get there? Find out in this report from Lawrence Pollard:

Arnold Schwarzenegger is a former **Mr. Universe** who overcame an inability either to act or speak English to become one of the world’s biggest film stars. To Californians his **candidacy** is not as bizarre as it might seem to the rest of the world.

Firstly Mr. Schwarzenegger is hugely famous for his simple and effective action movies. This gives him the **strong public image** any politician would want, complete with «I’ll be back» **catchphrases** and a salary of 30 million dollars a film. Secondly, his is a **glamorous version** of the American immigrant dream, arriving as a mere Austrian bodybuilder before finding fame, fortune and a **Kennedy-clan** wife.

It should be remembered that Hollywood has always been **intimately bound** to its local politics, not only by providing governor - later President - Ronald Reagan. The film industry didn’t grow as it has without **political favour** and protection and movie stars have been campaigning both for and against Mr. Schwarzenegger whose **sheer level of fame** has dominated the ballot.

Media coverage has been notable for its use of the language of Hollywood - «Will Conan the Republican **Terminate** the Governor who’s facing Total Recall?» Politics and Hollywood - as the film title says, its all «True Lies.»

■ **Words**

Mr. Universe: the winner of an annual competition for male bodybuilders (a bodybuilder is someone who likes to develop their muscles

candidacy: the fact of being nominated for election
strong public image: if you have a strong public image, this means that many people know you and they have a good opinion of you
catchphrases: sentences or phrases often connected with one particular person

glamorous version: an attractive or exciting account of an event
Kennedy-clan: a clan is a group of people (sometimes family, as in this case) closely connected with each other by similar aims or interests

intimately bound: closely connected

political favour: if you have political favour, you are given advantages or support by people in Government which other people don’t get

sheer level of fame: huge popularity alone

terminate: bring to an end

(Source: BBC)

Israel sees Syria as existential threat: Nasrallah

Israeli authorities believe there is an existential threat to the Tel Aviv regime from Syria, particularly in light of the presence of fighters from Hezbollah and Iranian military advisors there, the Secretary General of Lebanon's resistance movement says.

"Israel sees Syria as a danger and the country plays a great role in the threat perception of Israeli officials. The reason behind the war in Syria had nothing to do with the incumbent government in Damascus, but rather it was because the United States could not exert dominance there," Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah said in a televised speech broadcast from the Lebanese capital city of Beirut on Wednesday evening.

Syria, having refused to bow down to U.S. hegemony, lies in the heart of the Middle East region, he added.

"We knew that Hezbollah's involvement in Syria's war could have dire repercussions. Nevertheless, we believed that we were obliged to defend Syria and Palestine in the face of the U.S. scheme," Nasrallah said.

He then praised senior Hezbollah commander Mustafa Badreddine, who was killed in an attack in Syria four years ago, for his high morale, stating that he was fighting shoulder to shoulder in Syria with the late commander of Iran's Quds Force Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani, who was assassinated by a U.S. terrorist strike near Baghdad International Airport on January 3, Press TV reported.

"Martyr Badreddine was certain of the final victory, even though Syrian military forces suffered losses in the first stages of the war. Syrian people and the government have emerged victorious in the war, thanks to their resilience and steadfastness. Syria has survived the disintegration plot," the Hezbollah chief stated.

"Hegemonic powers continue to exert political pressure, wage a psychological war and impose sanctions on Syria in light of its military victories." Nasrallah then dismissed "unfounded" reports of tension between Russia and Iran in Syria, saying they are part of a psychological war against Moscow and Tehran as well as their allies.

"It is perfectly natural for allies to have different estimations, but there is no conflict between the allies in Syria at all," he underlined.

The Hezbollah head then scoffed at latest remarks by Israeli Minister of Military Affairs Naftali Bennett that the Tel Aviv regime will pursue operations in Syria until Iranian forces leave, stating that Tehran has only military advisers in Syria who train army forces and coordinate the Islamic Republic's support for Damascus.

Yemeni forces retake strategic positions from Saudi-led mercenaries

→ 1 Saudi Arabia and a number of its regional allies launched the devastating war on Yemen in March 2015 in order to bring Hadi back to power and crush the popular Houthi Ansarullah movement.

The U.S.-based Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED), a nonprofit conflict-research organization, estimates that the war has claimed more than 100,000 lives over the past five years.

More than half of Yemen's hospitals and clinics have been destroyed or closed during the war by the Saudi-led coalition, which is supported militarily by the UK, U.S. and other Western nations.

At least 80 percent of the 28 million-strong population is also reliant on aid to survive in what the United Nations has called the world's worst humanitarian crisis.

A different Ramadan for U.S. Muslims amid Coronavirus lockdowns

→ 1 To help families celebrate, especially those who've lost income due to shutdowns, New York City has announced plans to serve more than 500,000 halal meals to Muslims during Ramadan.

A halal meal is one that is prepared in accordance with Islamic law. "One of Ramadan's most noble callings is to feed the hungry," Mayor Bill de Blasio said during a press conference. "It's a crucial part of how the holiday is celebrated, to remember to be there for those in need, and that is now harder than ever."

With more than 22 percent of American Muslims living in New York City, the public health crisis is upending the annual celebration.

From Brooklyn to the Bronx, Muslim community organizations are building mutual aid networks to support Muslim families who need food, particularly during Ramadan, when many families rely on free nightly meals from local mosques.

In Kensington, the Brooklyn Islamic Center distributed food to about 5,000 people in April, at the beginning of Ramadan, the holiest month on the Islamic calendar, Saiful Alam, the center's president, told BKRReader. "We are also distributing food all over Brooklyn to needy people who call us," Alam added. "Our center has been assisting people who need any kind of help, like families who don't have money to bury their loved one."

In Bedford Stuyvesant, members of Masjid At Taqwa have also distributed food in its community.

Venezuela requests emergency UN Security Council session over attempted mercenaries raid

Venezuela has requested the UN Security Council to hold an emergency meeting to discuss the purported incursion of mercenaries, which Caracas says was organized by the United States and Colombia to topple the incumbent government.

In his 14-page request, Venezuela's envoy to the UN Samuel Moncada notifies the Security Council that "between 03 and 04 May 2020, armed groups of mercenaries and terrorists, organized, trained, financed and protected by the governments of the Republic of Colombia and the United States of America, illegally entered the Venezuelan territory."

"In that order, I would like to respectfully request hereby, through you, in your capacity as President of the Security Council of the United Nations, that said body urgently holds the discussions that may be necessary in order to: i) recognize that the aggression perpetrated by the Governments of Bogota and Washington against Venezuela, between 03 and 04 May 2020, was an armed attack that attempted against the peace and security of both my nation and the region; and ii) issue a clear statement condemning and prohibiting the use or threat of use of force in all its forms and manifestations against Venezuela," the statement says.

(Source: TASS)

Is Trump insane to threaten cutting off ties with China?

«Is Trump totally insane?» Experts and the international community couldn't help but ask this question after U.S. President Donald Trump threatened to «cut off the whole relationship» with China on Thursday in an interview with FOX Business. Observers said that Trump's word would never deter China, but may shock U.S. political and business circles and its own people, and may put world peace in a dangerous position.

«There are many things we could do,» Trump told FOX Business' Maria Bartiromo Thursday. «We could cut off the whole relationship.» Trump added that ending relations with China would «save \$500 billion.»

Fox Business said in a report that Trump's Thursday remarks were one of his «strongest comments yet in dealing with China» in the wake of its handling of the coronavirus pandemic.

■ Americans will suffer

«Again! Trump is talking nonsense.» Trump seems to be losing his mind right now. Even he has such crazy ideas of cutting ties with China, U.S. politicians, businessmen and Americans would not allow him to do so, Xin Qiang, deputy director of the Center for U.S. Studies at Fudan University, told the Global Times.

He noted that Trump is bluffing and acting tough toward China to win more support. Fox News, which has been regarded as Trump's defender and is notorious for a lack of professionalism, is also making eye-catching news to draw attention.



Jin Canrong, the associate dean of Renmin University of China's School of International Studies in Beijing, told the Global Times on Thursday that Trump made very irresponsible and emotional remarks in the interview.

«The China-U.S. relationship is the most important bilateral relationship in the world and involves huge interests of the two countries, as well as the rest of the world. Therefore, it is not something he can cut off emotionally,» Jin said.

«If the U.S. unilaterally cuts off ties, the American people will pay a heavier price than us, because China's domestic market is huge and 75-80 percent of Chinese manufacturers are supplying China's market, and the 2 to 5 percent that supply the U.S. can also be absorbed by the domestic market,» he noted.

U.S. stocks fell sharply in pre-market trading, with the Dow and NASDAQ futures all dropping more than one percent after Trump's remarks on Thursday.

China has nothing to be afraid of as «in

the past, we didn't solve the Taiwan question because we wanted to maintain the China-U.S. relationship, and if the U.S. unilaterally cuts it off, we can just reunify Taiwan immediately since the Chinese mainland has an overwhelming advantage to solve this long-standing problem.»

«Trump is like a giant baby on the brink of a meltdown as he faces tremendous pressure due to massive failures that caused such a high death toll,» Shen Yi, an expert from Fudan University, told the Global Times. «It's like someone who wants to show his guts when he passes by a cemetery in mid-night. He needs to shout to give himself the courage,» he said.

Shen also noted that the American companies and industries would suffer the most severe consequences, because the supply chain has been integrated with China.

«The Chinese public would only take such bluffing as a joke,» Shen said, adding that there has been no U.S. president in the history who has made such a ridiculous statement against China, not even during the Cold War.

According to Global Times, Yuan Zheng, a research fellow at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS), said he could not even remember any U.S. leader who took a similar action. «His flip-flop rhetoric is unprecedented, but we need to take a look at whether Trump will take real action,» he said, noting that there is no need to pay attention to claims that are unrealistic and meaningless.

Iraqi parliament urges shutdown of Saudi TV channel's office after insult to late PMU cmdr.

The Iraqi parliament has called for the closure of the office of Saudi-funded TV channel MBC after it insulted late Hashd al-Sha'abi commander Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis.

In a statement on Friday, the Iraqi Parliament's Communications and Information Committee said the MBC office in Iraq must be shut down unless it apologizes for insulting the former deputy commander of Iraq's Popular Mobilization Units (PMU) – better known by its Arabic name Hashd al-Sha'abi.

The statement described al-Muhandis as a national icon and warrior, and said Saudi-funded news institutions with sectarian attitudes must not be allowed to insult such Iraqi figures.

"This channel has in recent years insulted Iraqi figures



in different ways, and this time it has gone as far as levelling accusations against a national figure, the martyred commander Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis,» the statement added, according to Iraq's Al-Ahad TV channel.

According to Press TV, in reaction to the Saudi TV channel's insult, the PMU also filed a lawsuit against MBC, urging Iraqi regulatory bodies to take action against such deceptive media offending top Iraqi commanders.

A statement released by the office of PMU chief Falih al-Fayyadh described Abu Mahdi as a hero who spent his entire life on fighting against terrorism and liberation of Iraq.

It also referred to MBC's insult as part of biased propaganda against the commanders of Iraq's victory on Daesh.

Afghans say Taliban behind bloodshed, reject U.S. blame of ISIL



Afghan officials on Friday blamed the Taliban for a bloody attack on a maternity hospital in the capital, Kabul, this week, rejecting a U.S. assertion that it was carried out by ISIL (ISIS) militants.

Three gunmen disguised as police attacked the hospital on Tuesday, killing 24 people including two babies in a clinic run by the international humanitarian organization Medicines Sans Frontieres (MSF).

No group has claimed responsibility. The Taliban, who struck a deal with the United States in February clearing the way for the withdrawal of U.S. troops and the end of America's longest war, denied responsibility.

U.S. Special Representative Zalmay Khalilzad, the architect of the pact with the Taliban, blamed Islamic State militants for the attack, saying they opposed any Taliban deal and sought to trigger an Iraq-style sectarian war in Afghanistan. But Afghan officials in Kabul dismissed the Taliban denial.

"Neither the Taliban hands nor their stained consciousness can be washed of the blood of women, babies & other innocent in the latest senseless carnage," Afghan Vice President Amrullah Saleh said on Twitter.

Saleh, a former intelligence chief, did not mention Khalilzad's assertion but said earlier some people were naive for accepting Taliban lies and blaming the "fictional" Islamic State faction in Afghanistan for the attack.

■ 'Evidence'

A senior Afghan government official said the patterns of recent attacks showed the involvement of the Taliban and the affiliated Haqqani Network, whose head, Sirajuddin Haqqani, is the deputy chief of the Taliban, in the Kabul attack.

The official, who declined to be identified questioned Khalilzad's assessment as "premature" adding that all the evidence suggested it was not Islamic State who carried out the raid on the hospital.

According to Reuters, The Taliban, who condemned the hospital attack, said the Afghan government had attempted to pin the blame on them "without any expert investigation".

U.S. weighs returning Cuba to list of 'state sponsors of terrorism'



The United States is considering returning Cuba to its list of state sponsors of terrorism, a senior official in the administration of U.S. President Donald Trump told Reuters news agency on Thursday - a move that would mark another major blow to increasingly tense relations between Washington and Havana.

There is a "convincing case" that Cuba should be placed back on the U.S. blacklist, in part because of its continued backing for socialist Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro and the refuge it gives to leaders of Colombia's National Liberation Army (ELN) rebel group, the official said.

Speaking on condition of anonymity, the official did not rule out that a decision on Cuba's relisting could come by the end of the year.

In what was possibly a preliminary step, the Trump administration said on Wednesday that it had put the Communist-ruled island back on a separate list of countries that do not cooperate fully with its efforts to counter "terrorism".

Havana, which has long denied any link to so-called terrorism, dismissed Wednesday's Department of State announcement as "spurious".

Returning Cuba to the blacklist would be a further rollback of the detente that former President Barack Obama orchestrated between the old Cold War foes. His

decision to formally remove Cuba from the "terrorism" list in 2015 was an important step toward restoring diplomatic ties that year.

Trump's toughened stance on Cuba, as well as Venezuela, has gone down well in the large Cuban-American community in south Florida, an important voting bloc in a key political swing state as he seeks re-election in November.

The designation by Washington - which carries the potential for sanctions and trade restrictions - would put Cuba in the company of Iran, North Korea, Syria and Sudan.

■ Cuba's role in Venezuela

Any decision to put Cuba back on the list would take into account Havana's support for Maduro, whose 2018 re-election was considered a sham by most Western countries. The U.S. government indicted him and much of his inner circle in March on charges of "narco-terrorism" conspiracy, corruption and drug trafficking. Maduro has denied the charges.

The U.S. and dozens of other nations recognised opposition leader Juan Guaido as interim president last year. But Maduro, who calls Guaido a U.S. puppet, remains in power, backed by Venezuela's military as well as Russia, China, Cuba and Iran.

Some U.S. officials have said privately that this has been a growing source of frustration for Trump.

Emergency teams race to contain virus spread in Rohingya camps

Emergency teams were moving swiftly on Friday to prevent a coronavirus "nightmare" in the world's largest refugee settlement after the first confirmed cases in a camp housing nearly a million Rohingyas in Bangladesh.

Local government official Mahfuzar Rahman said on Friday an entire block in one camp, housing approximately 5,000 people, was shut off.

"We have locked down the block, barring anyone from entering or leaving their homes," he said.

Rahman added that they were also trying to "contact-trace" people the infected person had met and they would all be

brought to isolation centers set up in the camps.

A senior advocate for Refugees International, Daniel Sullivan, said the first COVID-19 case was the "realization of a nightmare scenario".

A senior US official who has visited the refugees said it was only a matter of time for the virus to reach them.

"The refugee camp is incredibly crowded. The COVID virus will spread through there very rapidly," said Sam Brownback, the ambassador-at-large for international religious freedom.

On Thursday, local health coordinator Abu Toha Bhuiyan

said two refugees had tested positive.

But the World Health Organization (WHO) later said one case was a Rohingya man, and the other was a local man who lived near the camp and was being treated at a clinic inside the area.

WHO spokesman Catalin Bercaru told the AFP news agency that "rapid investigation teams" were being deployed and that the men's contacts were being traced for quarantine and testing.

Shamim Jahan from Save the Children said "we are looking at the very real prospect that thousands of people may die from COVID-19", with "no intensive care beds" in the camps.

Iran have two direct slots in 2021 ACL

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — According to the latest Asian Football Confederation (AFC) club competitions ranking, Iran will have two direct slots in the group stage and two others in the preliminary rounds for the next season of the AFC Champions League.

The AFC Club Competitions Ranking is a ranking system launched by the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) in 2014. The ranking is based on the results of teams participating in the last four years of the AFC Champions League and the AFC Cup, as well as the member associations' FIFA ranking. The ranking is used for example to decide who play who in the Asian Champions League preliminary rounds.

The two top member associations in both East and West zones of Asia get three direct slots in the group stage of the AFC Champions League plus one slot in the play-off rounds of the competition which will have 40 clubs in 2021, with an increase from the previous 32.

Iran, dropping down one place, stand 6th overall and third in West Zone with 81.724 total points in the latest club competitions ranking issued by AFC. Qatar and Saudi Arabia ranked first and second in West Asia, respectively.

The 2021 AFC Champions League will be the 40th edition of Asia's premier club football tournament organized by the AFC, and the 19th under the current AFC Champi-



ons League (ACL) title. The 47 AFC member associations are ranked based on their clubs' performance over the last four years in AFC competitions (their national team's FIFA World Rankings no longer considered).

Persian Golf Pro League champions and Hazfi Cup winners will take Iran's two direct slots in group stages of the AFC Champions League and the second and third teams in the league will represent Iran in the preliminary

rounds of the ACL.

Persepolis, Esteghlal, Sepahan, and Shahr Khodro are four Iranian teams competing in the group stage of the current season of ACL.



Ex-Iran coach Igor Kolakovi named Virtu CMC Zawiercie coach

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Former Iran national volleyball team head coach Igor Kolakovic took charge of Polish team Aluron Virtu CMC Zawiercie.

The Montenegrin coach has penned a two-year deal for an undisclosed fee.

Kolakovic parted company with Iran after the cancellation of VNL 2020 and Olympic Games due to coronavirus pandemic.

The 55-year-old coach will be assisted by Dominik Kwapisiewicz in his new team.

"I have already decided to work in a club after finishing work in Iran. I would like to lead a European team and Poland was my favorite league to work. Three years ago I negotiated with the club but finally took charge of Iran national volleyball team. I am not going to reveal the details," Kolakovic said.

Four Iranian legends among Asia's greatest Bundesliga players

Four Iranian football greats are among the top ten players selected by AFC as the best players who ever played in Germany's Bundesliga.

Asian Football Confederation (AFC) has conducted a poll to determine Asia's greatest Bundesliga player. The poll available on the official website of the AFC asks respondents and football fans to pick their favorite player from a shortlist of ten players.

Ali Daei, Mehdi Mahdavi, Ashkan Dejagah, and Vahid Hashemian are the Iranian nominees in the list along with other Asian stars such as Cha Bum-kun, Koo Ja-cheol, Son Heung-min (Korea Republic), and Yasuhiko Okudera, Shinji Kagawa, and Makoto Hasebe all from Japan.

"For more than 40 years, Asian players have starred in Germany's Bundesliga. From pioneers like Okudera and Cha to modern-day icons like Mahdavi and Kagawa, some of Asia's greatest footballing names have been made not only in national team colors but also in packed stadiums from Bremen to Bavaria," the website reads and then describe the players as following:

■ **Mehdi Mahdavi (IR Iran)**
1998-2010
Clubs: VfL Bochum, Hamburger SV, Eintracht Frankfurt
Games: 253
Goals: 29
Honors: AFC Player of the Year (2003), Hamburger SV Team of the Century

Introduced to German football by Bochum following IR Iran's appearance at the 1998 FIFA World Cup, it was Mahdavi's eight fruitful seasons in Hamburg which cemented the winger/full-back as a Bundesliga star.

A provider of more than 50 Bundesliga assists — leading the league with 14 in 2002-03 and backing up with another nine the



following season — Mahdavi helped his club to regular European appearances and won admiration throughout the continent for his attacking qualities.

■ **Ashkan Dejagah (IR Iran)**
2004-2012, 2017
Clubs: Hertha BSC, VfL Wolfsburg
Games: 158
Goals: 19
Honors: Bundesliga (2008-09)
Born in Tehran and raised in Berlin, Dejagah was a regular German youth international in his teens before becoming a star in the Bundesliga, as well as the Iranian national team, in his twenties.

A scorer and provider of goals from midfield, Dejagah is one of three Asian players to have helped Felix Magath's unheralded Wolfsburg outfit from fifth place to a surprise title in 2008-09 and also made a name for himself in the English Premier League with Fulham.

■ **Vahid Hashemian (IR Iran)**
1999-2008
Clubs: Hamburger SV, VfL Bochum, Bayern Munich, Hannover 96
Games: 208
Goals: 38
Honors: Bundesliga (2004-05), DFB Pokal (2004-05), DFB Ligapokal (2004)
One of several Iranian stars who made Germany home in the late 90s and early 2000s, Hashemian played for four clubs, including nine league appearances for title-winning Bayern Munich in 2004-05, but his best football came during his time at VfL Bochum.

After helping them to promotion from the second tier two seasons prior, Hashemian's 16 league goals during the 2003-04 campaign took him to fourth on the scoring charts and helped Bochum to fifth on the league table — equaling their best ever Bundesliga finish.

■ **Ali Daei (IR Iran)**
1997-2002
Clubs: Arminia Bielefeld, Bayern Munich, Hertha BSC
Games: 107
Goals: 19
Honors: Bundesliga (1998-99), DFB Ligapokal (1998-99), AFC Player of the Year (1999)

Famous the world over for his exceptional goal-scoring record in international football, Daei also played a pioneering role in the club game as one of several Iranian stars to make the move to Germany in the late 1990s.

While he wasn't as prolific in the Bundesliga as he was for the national team, Daei still experienced several memorable highs.

He was part of the Bayern squad which won the league title in 1999 and scored against both AC Milan and Chelsea, twice, in the following season's UEFA Champions League before returning to Asia in 2002.

IOC Athletes' Commission elections delayed until 2021

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) Executive Board confirmed the postponement of the Athletes' Commission elections until 2021.

Meeting virtually today, the Executive Board confirmed they would extend the IOC membership of the Athletes' Commission representatives whose terms would have expired at this year's Olympic Games in Tokyo.

Four athletes on the Commission — chairperson Kirsty Coventry, co-chair Danka Barteková, France's Tony Estanguet, and James Tomkins of Australia, whose positions on the body carry automatic IOC membership — were due to be replaced this year.

In addition, an appointed member of the Commission, Stefan Holm of Sweden, was also set to end his term.

IOC President Bach announced the news during an online press conference following the Executive Board meeting.

"We had to address the situation regarding the five members of the IOC Athletes' Commission, whose terms would

have expired this year," he said.

"The Executive Board was of the unanimous opinion that in this critical time we need full representation of athletes and the athletes' voice in this endeavour to organise the postponed Olympic Games.

"Therefore, we should not have any vacancies with regard to athletes' representation.

"The Board decided that the term of these five members would be extended until the end of the Olympic Games, now being celebrated in 2021.

"During these postponed Games we would have the regular elections for the replacement of these five members." Slovakian shooter Bartekova is the only one standing for re-election to the Commission, while it is widely believed that Coventry will be made an ordinary IOC member.

The Zimbabwean double Olympic swimming gold medalist has aligned herself closely with IOC President Thomas Bach and was appointed chair of the Coordina-

tion Commission for the 2022 Summer Youth Games in Dakar in 2018.

A total of 30 athletes will stand for the four vacant places on the Athletes' Commission, all of which carry the added incentive of IOC membership.

A separate vote for the chairperson and vice-chair had also been scheduled for the first meeting of the Athletes' Commission with the new members at the end of Tokyo 2020.

The chairperson automatically becomes part of the IOC's ruling Executive Board.

The Athletes' Commission election was one of the numerous issues which needed to be addressed following the postponement of Tokyo 2020.

It was rescheduled after the coronavirus pandemic worsened across the world, with the Olympics now set to run from July 23 to August 8 2021, followed by the Paralympics from August 24 to September 5.

(Source: Insidethegames)

AHF announces update to Asian Junior Handball C'ship

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Asian Handball Federation (AHF) announced updates to its 2020 Asian men's Junior Handball Championship calendar.



The competition has been rescheduled for October 5 to 15. The competition was originally scheduled to be held from August 14 to 25, 2020 in the southern Iranian city of Shiraz, Fars Province but it was cancelled due to the coronavirus outbreak.

It will be fifth time in history that championship will be organized by the Islamic Republic of Iran Handball Federation (IRIHF).

It also acts as the qualification tournament for the 2021 Men's Junior World Handball Championship.

Top four teams from the championship will directly qualify for the Junior World Championship to be held in Hungary.

Esteghlal's Hosseini wins the ACL best save

Esteghlal goalkeeper Hossein Hosseini's save was chosen as the best ever save in AFC Champions League competitions.

In the match against Al Duhail, he saved Youssef El Arabi's attack in the group stage and won the award with 75 percent.

It seemed the prolific Moroccan had been presented with an easy tap-in but, with the goal at his mercy, an outstretched Hosseini pulled off a stunning save that looks even more remarkable on the slow-motion replay.

Persepolis goalkeeper Alireza Beiranvand, who saved Al Sadd captain Xavi's header, came second with 25 percent in the '5 of the Best' public poll.

The two keepers competed with Eugene Galekovic (Adelaide United), Ante Covic (Western Sydney Wanderers) and Kwoun Sun-tae (Kashima Antlers) to win the best save award in a fans poll. (Source: the-afc)

Persepolis offered Amir Abedzadeh

PLDC — The Iranian media reported that Persepolis football club have been offered the chance to sign Marítimo goalkeeper Amir Abedzadeh.

Iranian newspaper Khabar Varzeshi reported that Persepolis could consider Amir, son of Iran and Persepolis legendary goalkeeper Ahmad Reza Abedzadeh, as a replacement for Alireza Beiranvand.

Beiranvand has signed a contract with Belgian football club Antwerp and will leave Persepolis at the end of the current season.

Bozidar Radosevic will be Persepolis No. 1 in the next season but the Iranian team's officials are going to sign another top goalkeeper.

Amir Abedzadeh started his goalkeeping career in Persepolis Academy in 2006 and joined English club Brentford.

He was member of Persepolis from 2012 to 2014 but failed to represent the team and joined Rah Ahan.

In 2016, he signed a contract with Portuguese football club Barreirense and then signed a deal with Marítimo a year later.

Iran unchanged in World Futsal Ranking

Persian Football — The Iranian national futsal team remained unchanged in the latest Futsal World Ranking released on Thursday.

Iran are the best Asian team and sixth in the world with 1603 points. Brazil and Spain are first and second with 1810 and 1801 points, respectively.

Argentina remained third with 1694 points. Russia and Portugal are fourth and fifth with 1642 and 1639 points, respectively.

Yali, Fayazi join Shahr-dari Orumiyeh VC

TASNIM — Iran national volleyball team outside spiker Porya Yali and outside hitter Porya Fayazi joined Shahr-dari Orumiyeh.

The Iranian team headed by Peyman Akbari had already signed Meysam Salehi, a young member of Iran national volleyball team. Shahr-dari Orumiyeh are going to win Iranian Volleyball Super League for the first time ever.

The club founded in 1966 based in Orumiyeh in West Azarbaijan province, northwestern Iran.

FIVB announces updates to VNL

FIVB announced updates to its 2020-2021 volleyball calendar following cancellation of Volleyball Nations League (VNL) 2020.

According to FIVB.com, the VNL 2021 will be held starting from the second week of May 2021, either May 7 or 11, 2021 with the starting date to be confirmed shortly, and ending on June 27, 2021, finishing almost one month before the Olympic Games Tokyo 2020.

This schedule will ensure that volleyball players have time to prepare for both the VNL and the Olympic Games, maintain their health and fitness, and perform at their best for these prestigious competitions.

Meanwhile, the FIVB is continuing to work closely with all parties to coordinate the detailed schedule for the VNL 2021 while retaining both Italy and China as the host nations for the finals. (Source: FIVB)

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GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

A person who analyzes himself receives a benefit, and he who neglects it, is a loser. He who learns a lesson from others, finds insight, and with such insight comes understanding and avoiding ignorance, and he who understands, will be well aware.
Imam Ali (AS)

Virtual meetings to celebrate Khayyam Day

→1 Marzieh Khanqoli will also review the Seljuk historical sites in Khayyam's hometown of Neyshabur. Marjan Movahhed is scheduled to deliver a speech about Seljuk pottery. The University of Neyshabur will also hold a webinar on Monday along with Majdeddin Keivani, Majid Mirza-Vaziri, Mohammad Baqeri, Hassan Sadeqi and several other Khayyam experts.



Mausoleum of Persian mathematician, astronomer and poet Omar Khayyam in Neyshabur. (IRNA/Morteza Aminorroayai)

The Neyshabur Office of Education also plans to organize an online literary competition about Khayyam for students available on the application shaddl. In addition, artists and literati have launched several online programs to celebrate Khayyam Day. Khayyam is chiefly known to English-speaking readers through a translation of a collection of his quatrains in the Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam by the English writer Edward FitzGerald.

Online exhibit displaying miniature paintings on Shahnameh stories

CULTURE **TEHRAN** — The Iranian Academy of Arts is showcasing a collection of miniature paintings featuring stories from Ferdowsi's masterpiece Shahnameh in an online exhibition.

The collection, which is on view on the academy website, was created in 2018 to commemorate the great Persian poet and revive the art of illustration.

The academy invited 25 masters of miniature who together created 30 miniatures, which were first displayed at the Saba Art and Cultural Institute in Tehran in 2019.

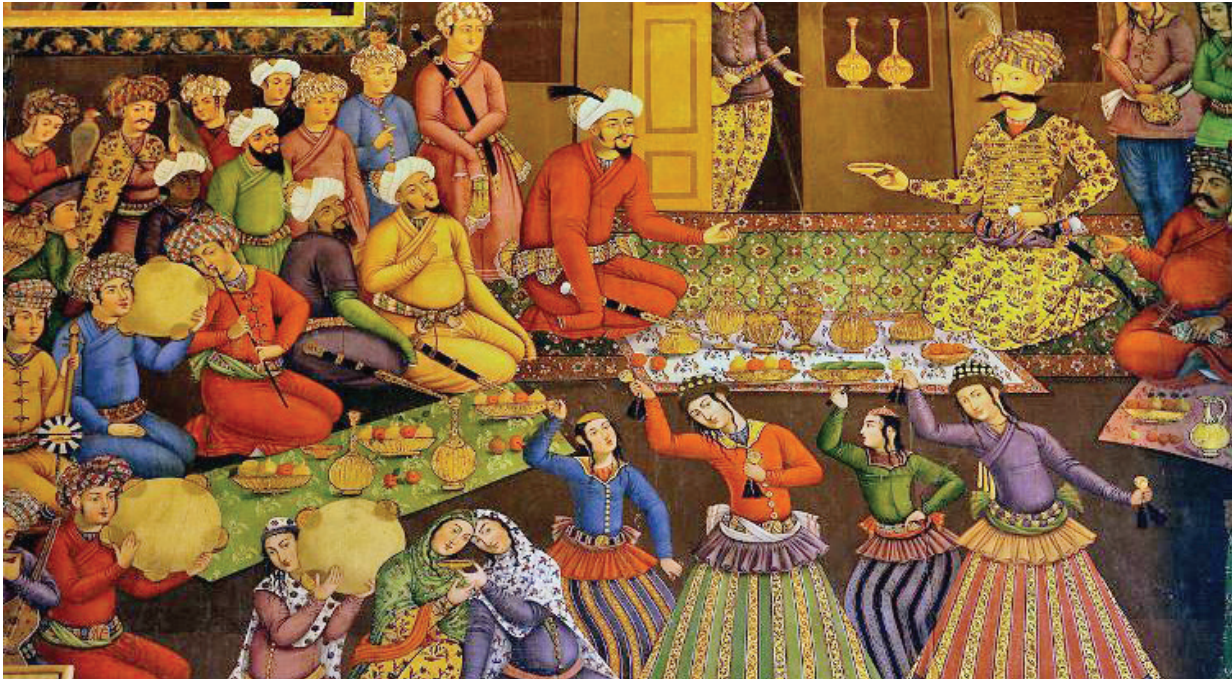
The exhibit has been set up to commemorate Ferdowsi Day, which was celebrated on May 14 this year.

The drive-in is giving indie films a box office boost

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Indie films and drive-in theaters don't usually go together. Drive-ins need the big movies, the ones with superheroes and superstars, to draw substantial audiences. So it was a little surprising when "The Wretched," a supernatural horror flick with no stars, earned nearly \$70,000 from 12 drive-in theaters on its first weekend. In just two weeks, the IFC Films release has made over \$200,000 from drive-ins alone, some of which are only open on the weekends for a single showing a night. And it's been available to rent at home the whole time. In pre-pandemic times, it would be considered a solid opening for the IFC. In the current climate, it's a big hit. The pandemic has forced many in the movie business to get creative with release dates and strategies. For most, that's meant delaying things a few months or more. But IFC Films found a silver lining in the drive-in, a theatrical experience uniquely suited to social distancing that also needed new films.

Iranian, Russian centers to discuss man's place in Safavid paintings

A R T **TEHRAN** — Man's place in the paintings created during the Safavid period (1501–1736), a golden age of Iranian art, will be scrutinized during a webinar, which is scheduled to be organized by several Iranian and Russian cultural centers on Monday. Iran's Institute for Humanities and Cultural Studies and the Iranian Association of Russian Language and Literature will organize the webinar in collaboration with the Higher School of Economics and the Ibn Sina Islamic Culture Research Foundation in Moscow, the organizers have announced. The webinar, which will start at 7:30 pm on Adobe connect <http://185.126.202.195./iarll>, will be held in memory of Mais Dzangir-ogly Nazarli, a Russian art historian who died few weeks ago. He was also an expert on Safavid-era art and the author of "Lam and Alif, or Love in Islamic Calligraphy". "The Royal Spirit of the Safavid Paintings" and "The Issue of the Interpretation of the Creative Method of Safavid Painters", are among the over 30 articles Nazarli wrote about the Safavid art. The organizers have provided simultaneous translation for the Russian-speaking audience. Hanif Rahimi, a professor of Islamic art at the University of Science and Arts of Yazd will deliver a lecture at the webinar.



A mural features a miniature painting at Chehel Sotun Palace, a Safavid-era monument in Isfahan.

Cultural officials offer congratulations on Ferdowsi Day

CULTURE **TEHRAN** — Several cultural officials have offered congratulations over Ferdowsi Day, which was commemorated this year on May 14. Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance Seyyed Abbas Salehi in his message published on Thursday called Ferdowsi the renovator of the history of Iran and the source of inspiration for the artists of today. "His masterpiece Shahnameh is a precious treasure and an endless source for creation," he added. "This great masterpiece has had a significant role in the life and dynamism of the Persian language. Without Ferdowsi and his Shahnameh, the fate of this language would have been vague and unclear," he noted. Gholam-Ali Haddad-Adel, the director of the Academy of Persian Language and Literature, also sent a video message. "The Persian language has long been the venerable and common heritage of the great nations in the Indian subcontinent, West Asia, Central Asia, Afghanistan and south China," he said.



A statue of Ferdowsi set up near his tomb in Tus.

"This language after over 12 centuries in exchange with other languages, especially Arabic, has reached a high value, turning into the second language of the world of Islam," he added.

Winners of Iranian painting contest in Brunei announced

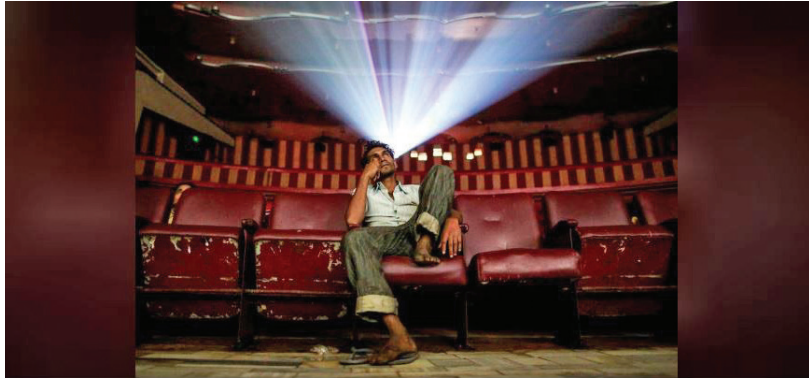
A R T **TEHRAN** — The winners of a painting competition organized by the Iranian Embassy in the Bruneian capital of Bandar Seri Begawan has been announced. The competition focused on the themes "coronavirus, health, family, hope, peace and sanctions," the Iranian Embassy has said. The painting contest was organized among 50 Iranian and Bruneian children aged between 4 and 12 to stress the need for the recognition of the importance of family, hope and peace during the home quarantine for the COVID-19 pandemic.

Among the Bruneian children, a 12-year-old girl named Rachel Pong won first prize while Issac Tiong Ing Heo, a 10-year-old boy, took second place. Nathan Pong Zhen Yang, a six-year-old boy, and Kaireen Punjabi, a 12-year-old girl shared third prize. Anahita Afshari-Tavana, a 10-year-old girl, took first place among the Iranian children while a 10-year-old girl named Sara Abay Fini won second prize. Delaram Reza and Hodayun Karkhaneyusefi, both 10, shared third prize. The submissions were judged by Brunei Art Forum President Dato Shofry Abdul Ghafor.



Anahita Afshari-Tavana won first prize among the Iranian children at Iran's painting competition in Bandar Seri Begawan, Brunei.

Amazon Prime snags Bollywood premieres as pandemic closes theatres



A cinema goer watches a Bollywood movie inside Maratha Mandir theatre in Mumbai December 11, 2014. (Reuters/Danish Siddiqui)

MUMBAI (Reuters) — Amazon Prime Video, Amazon's streaming service, said it will screen several new Indian films that were originally meant for theatrical release on its platform, starting later this month. The move marks a significant shift for the country's film industry, which relies heavily on box office revenue, and comes as lockdown measures to slow the spread of the coronavirus wreak havoc with film launches. Seven films, including two Bollywood films starring A-listers such as Amitabh Bachchan and Vidya Balan will stream directly on Amazon Prime Video, the company said in a statement on Friday. "Gulabo Sitabo", a family comedy with Bachchan and Ayushmann Khurrana, which was to release in April, will now stream directly on Amazon Prime Video in June, as will "Shakuntala Devi", a biopic on the Indian mathematician of the same name. India is in the middle of a strict lockdown as it battles a rising number of coronavirus cases, leaving about 9,500 theatres shut. Business at multiplexes and single-

screen cinemas is unlikely to bounce back for weeks or even months, as infection fears linger and discretionary spending plunges. "There will be a reset in the way that producers and studios think about their portfolios," Vijay Subramaniam, Director and Head, Content, Amazon Prime Video, India told Reuters in an interview. Subramaniam said Amazon, which competes in India with Netflix and Disney's Hotstar, did not see acquisition costs going up for the streaming platform. "Content costs are what they are, and as the model evolves, values will get reset. It's an act of checks and balances," he said. Bollywood is huge draw for India's burgeoning online audiences, who - driven by cheap data and smartphones - are spending more time watching content online than ever before. Streaming platforms like Amazon and Netflix have in the past signed deals with Bollywood studios for digital rights, but mainstream releases have always prioritized theatrical revenues first.

"Frozen" musical becomes biggest victim of Broadway coronavirus shutdown



(Reuters) — The Broadway family musical "Frozen" is closing permanently, producers announced on Thursday, the first big casualty of the coronavirus shutdown in New York's theatre industry. The Disney production, which opened in March 2018 and is based on the blockbuster 2013 movie, will not return, Disney said in a statement. Broadway theatres went dark on March 12 and this week extended the closure to Sept. 6. Live performances, especially big musicals with their large casts and the challenges of social distancing on stage, are expected to be among the last events to return while the coronavirus pandemic continues. "Frozen", about two sisters who are pulled apart by a mysterious secret, features the Oscar-winning song "Let It Go". Along with "Aladdin" and "The Lion King", the play was one of three Disney musicals based on popular movies running on Broadway. It was the first musical and the biggest Broadway production to fall victim to the coronavirus, which has hit New York City hardest in United States.

Thomas Schumacher, president and producer of Disney Theatrical Productions, said in a statement it was hard to believe a few years ago "that a global pandemic would so alter the world economy that running three Disney shows on Broadway would become untenable." "Frozen" was taking an average of about \$1 million a week in ticket sales, according to box-office data. The actors union Equity said the closure was a wake-up call showing the challenges faced by live theater during the pandemic. "Today's news should be an all hands on deck moment for Governor Cuomo, Mayor De Blasio and Congress," executive director Mary McColl said in a statement. "Public officials at all levels must think much more boldly about supporting the arts or our entire economy will be slower to recover," she added. Two plays - a new production of "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?" and new British comedy "Hangmen" - had opened in preview before the shutdown. Producers later said they will not return once Broadway reopens.